

MISSION COUNCIL OCTOBER 5-7 2007

MINUTES

Mission Council met at Ushaw College, Durham from Friday 5th October to Sunday 7th October 2007. Present with the Moderator were 66 voting members and 15 others in attendance.

Session One

Mission Council was convened by the Moderator, the Revd Dr Stephen Orchard, who invited the Chaplain, the Revd Lucy Brierley, to lead opening worship.

07/69 Welcome

The Moderator welcomed everyone present and offered a special welcome to those attending for the first time or in a new capacity:

07/70 Apologies for Absence

07/71 Agenda

The Deputy General Secretary introduced papers tabled for the meeting, and described something of the business before the meeting. The Moderator outlined the principle of consensus decision-making

07/72 Minutes

The Minutes of the March meeting were adopted as a true record.

07/73 Matters Arising/MCAG

The Deputy General Secretary presented the report of the Mission Council Advisory Group, noting that the report included the Matters Arising.

The Deputy General Secretary moved the adoption of Resolution (Paper A):

Resolution

Duty to Consider (Amendment)

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, reaffirms its policy that Ministers in full time stipendiary service should normally retire in the month of their 65th birthday but resolves that with the agreement of the synod and of the pastorate/post concerned this retirement may be deferred for a period of up to six months.

For the avoidance of doubt, Mission Council reaffirms the Assembly's decision of 2006, Resolution 26 'Duty to Consider' extension of full-time stipendiary service, for cases where a minister wishes to extend a period of full-time service beyond the six months after his or her 65th birthday.

The Resolution was carried

The Deputy General Secretary proposed the way in which to Resolutions of General Assembly, which required Mission Council action, should be handled: Resolutions 45 and 47 would be addressed later in the meeting. Resolution 50 would also be dealt with later, when thought had been given to the convening of a task group.

The Deputy General Secretary proposed that Mission Council approve the transfer of responsibility for the Windermere Centre from the Life and Witness Committee to the Education and Learning Committee. Mission Council agreed.

The Deputy General Secretary proposed that Mission Council agree that the Education and Learning Committee initiate an internal review of the Windermere Centre in the next 12-18 months (to be reported to Mission Council) outlining its anticipated role within the strategy presented in the Training Review and agreed by the 2006 General Assembly. Mission Council agreed

The Deputy General Secretary proposed that **the Stewardship sub-committee become a sub-committee of the Finance Committee, and that existing members of the sub-committee who wished to continue join those members appointed by the Finance committee.** Mission Council agreed.

The General Secretary introduced Paper A1 - The Regeneration Agency, and moved the resolution:

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, notes with gratitude the work already undertaken on the development of the Regeneration Agency, and encourages its further development as part of the mission of the United Reformed Church.

After brief discussion the Resolution was carried.

The General Secretary introduced paper A2 - Proposal for a Law and Polity Advisory Group, and moved the Resolution:

That Mission Council establish a Law and Polity Advisory Group to advise the Council on such constitutional and legal matters as the Council shall remit to it.

In discussion the following points were raised:

- it should be clarified that this is a permanent advisory group, not an *ad hoc* task group;
- the implications of General Assembly becoming a 'Council of Synods.'

The Clerk and the General Secretary responded. It was emphasised that Assembly members could not be mandated by their sending synods.

The Resolution was carried.

The General Secretary introduced paper A3 - Taking Forward the Final 'Catch the Vision' Report. He noted that General Assembly had instructed Mission Council and the Nominations Committee to do such further work as is necessary to create a 'think-tank' on mission and spirituality.

He highlighted Assembly Resolutions 5 and 5a. In discussion it was noted that:

- the process of electing Assembly Moderators must be finalised by March 2008

The General Secretary suggested that a small group be appointed to consider this. MCAG proposed that the Assembly Moderator the Immediate Past Moderator and two synod representatives would convene to receive submissions and put a proposal to the January Mission Council. In discussion it was further proposed that the Moderator-elect and the Clerk also be part of this group.

Mission Council agreed to the proposed expanded group.

07/74 Vision4Life

The General Secretary noted that presentations would be made at all synods at their autumn meetings.

07/75 Nominations Committee - Paper B

The Revd Malcolm Hanson reported, and moved adoption of Resolution 1:

Mission Council appoints Mr Frank Kantor as Secretary of Church and Society from 1 October 2007.

The Resolution was carried.

Mr Hanson moved adoption of Resolution 2:

Mission Council appoints Ms Francis Brienen as Secretary for Mission from 1st February 2008.

The Resolution was carried

Mr Hanson noted that Mr Simon Rowntree would convene the Group for Appointing a Moderator of the Eastern Synod, and that the Revd Fleur Houston would convene the group for appointing a Secretary for Ecumenical relations and Faith and Order.

Mr Hanson moved adoption of Resolution 3:

Mission Council appoints Ms Isobel Simmons to serve as a trustee forthwith and until Assembly 2010.

The Resolution was carried.

Mr Hanson outlined the principles and process for appointing the Mission Committee.

Mr Hanson noted that General Assembly had asked for a representative committee, which, if all synods sent representatives, would be over twenty-five in number.

The General Secretary said that the *Catch the Vision* Steering Group believed that mission happens where the local church is. Local churches are gathered into 13 families - synods. There was need for a close tie-up between these families and the whole church.

Mr Hanson moved adoption of Resolution 4:

Mission Council agrees to the composition of the Mission Committee as set out in Paragraph 6.7 of the Nominations Committee report.

The Resolution was carried.

The meeting adjourned

Session Two - Friday Evening

07/76 Pastoral Areas

The Revd Rowena Francis led a presentation on Pastoral Areas in the Northern synod.

Evening prayers were led by the Chaplain.

Session Three - Saturday Morning

During morning worship which was led by the Chaplain, the Moderator inducted Mr Frank Kantor as Secretary for Church and Society.

07/77 Resolution 40 Task Group

Rosemary Johnston presented the report of the Resolution 40 Task Group. (Papers E4 and E5)

Mrs Johnston noted all the various groups, committees, individuals and resource materials that had been consulted in the production of the declaration.

She argued that any document produced by Mission Council had to have the effect of causing change in behaviour for the better. The group recommended that a 4-page booklet called *Life Together* be prepared, with gave scenarios, asked questions, encouraged reflection and suggested resources.

In discussion:

- the real issue was about what to do and who to consult when something went wrong;
- this was not good from the viewpoint of criminal law;
- suggestions that churches might write their own declarations should be resisted;
- how could one avoid this becoming just another 'business' item in church meeting rather than becoming an integral part of the church's life?;
- two aspects had to be addressed; the need to encourage mutual respect; and the need to deal with criminal behaviour.

In accordance with the new Standing Orders the Moderator suspended the debate to return to it later, after the report of the Sexual Ethics Steering Group.

07/78 New Synod Structures

The Deputy General Secretary presented Paper G - New Synod Structures, and invited comments on the new synod structures.

Mission Council agreed that Synod Clerks be asked to keep the paper up to date and keep the General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary informed.

07/79 Church and Society

Mr Simon Loveitt presented Paper C. Resolutions would be taken to General Assembly and more would come to the January and March meetings of Mission Council

Mission Council adjourned.

Session Four - Saturday Morning

07/80 Mission Department

Mission Department and Mission Priorities Committee (Paper H)

The Revd Philip Woods introduced Paper H. The Mission Department had been asked to bring a mission programme to General Assembly in 2008. A survey was underway among congregations to determine local priorities and help the Mission Committee discern what was needed and how leadership might best be exercised.

Council divided into groups to discuss paper H

Session Five - Saturday Afternoon

07/81 Emergency Resolution

The Revd Kirsty Thorpe moved an emergency Resolution:

The Mission Council of the United Reformed Church, speaking on behalf of General Assembly, expresses its deep concern for the suffering of the people of Burma and supports the worldwide international demonstrations on October 6th 2007 against the suppression of freedom in that country. It instructs the Mission Department to convey this message to our partner churches in Burma.

Seconded by the Deputy General Secretary, the Resolution was carried.

07/82 Sexual Ethics Steering Group

The Revd Carla Grosch-Miller moved adoption of the Resolution:

Mission Council welcomes the work of the Resolution 40 task group, and encourages the wide dissemination of its *Life Together* work.

The Resolution was carried.

Mrs Grosch-Miller outlined the background to the work of the Sexual Ethics Steering Group, and presented the Group's report (paper E). She noted the work that had been done on education, training and awareness-raising; caring for victims and survivors; intervention and prevention: policies and procedures. She introduced paper E2, and explained the purpose and processes of the Pastoral Response Team.

In discussion on paper E2:

- pastoral response team would be available whether or not legal proceedings were in process;
- was support available for 'after Pastors'?; the Pastoral Response team would be highly trained and should be able to help with this;
- concern was expressed about perceived interference or the compromising of court proceedings;
- legal differences between England and Wales, and Scotland were highlighted.

Mrs Grosch-Miller moved adoption of the Resolution:

Mission Council accepts the Pastoral Response Team proposal as fulfilling the Declaration of Safe Church, in relation to ministerial misconduct and instructs the Deputy General Secretary to take the necessary steps to establish the PRT system.

The Resolution was carried.

Mission council considered paper E3 and E3i, 'Policy and Procedure in response to alleged incidents of sexual harassment and abuse against adults.'

Mrs Grosch-Miller responded to a number of comments and questions on papers E3 and E3i and moved the Resolution:

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, accepts the 'Policy and Procedure in response to alleged incidents of sexual harassment and abuse against adults' as fulfilling the Declaration of a Safe Church and instructs Synods and Assembly officers to implement the 'Policy and Procedure', subject to scrutiny by the legal advisers.

The Resolution was carried

Mrs Grosch-Miller moved the Resolution:

Mission Council establishes a Sexual Ethics Advisory Group to monitor all sexual ethics work in the church, to be made up of a Synod Moderator, one representative each from the Education and Learning Committee, the Ministries Committee and a synod safe church representative; and other expertise as needed.

The Resolution was carried.

Declaration of a Safe Church (paper E5)

Rosemary Johnston outlined options for responding to the revised declaration. Terry Oakley proposed that the new text be taken to General Assembly. Peter Poulter seconded. Rowena Francis suggested that the new text should be made available at Assembly without the Assembly being asked to approve the exact wording.

The Revd Carla Grosch-Miller thanked the church for the opportunity to work on the issues. Mission Council thanked Carla and the group.

Session Six - Saturday afternoon (after tea)

07/83 International Relations

The Revd Philip Woods commented on the responses from group discussions on the United Reformed Church's mission priorities. Members of Mission Council's comments would be compared and collated with those of local churches, and the result would be presented to the first meeting of the Mission Committee in January, and a report made to Mission Council in March 2008.

The Moderator thanked Philip Woods for his work as International Relations Officer, and wished him well in his new post with the Council for World Mission.

07/84 Staffing Advisory Group

Mrs Val Morrison presented the report of the Staffing Advisory Group, and moved the resolution:

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, appoints the Revd Dale Rominger as Secretary for World Church Relations from 1st November 2007 until 31st October 2012.

The Resolution was carried

07/85 Treasurer's Report

Mr John Ellis presented paper D and proposed:

Mission Council sets the basic stipend for 2008 at £21,060.

The Resolution was carried by a large majority.

Mr Ellis presented paper D1 and moved the Resolution:

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, resolves that with respect to the Church's contributions to the United Reformed Church Ministers Pension Fund:

- (i) from 1 November 2007, the active members' monthly stipend to be used in calculating the monthly payments to meet the shortfall in funding will be calculated based on the greater of a) the total active members' stipend roll in force in each particular month, and b) one twelfth of £11,895,208 indexed in line with the percentage increase in the level of a Minister's stipend between 1 January 2006 and the particular month; and**
- (ii) that an additional payment be made to the Fund to make up the difference between the shortfall funding payments made for the period from 1 January 2007 to 31 October 2007 and the payments that would have been made if the formula in (i) above had been in operation during that period.**

The Resolution was carried.

Mr Ellis presented paper D2 and moved the Resolution:

Mission Council accepts the budget for 2008 set out in the attachment to this report.

The Resolution was carried.

Mr Ellis presented paper D3 and moved the Resolution:

Mission Council endorses the proposals set out in paragraphs 11-14 [of paper D3] above and instructs the Finance Committee, in conjunction with the Education and Learning Committee, to undertake the necessary detailed negotiations on behalf of the Church.

After discussion it was agreed that those with concerns should meet with the Treasurer before the Resolution was formally addressed.

07/86 Ministries Committee

The Revd Peter Poulter presented the report of the Ministries Committee (paper L). Mission Council split into small groups to consider the options on page 3 of paper L. After group discussion, the following points were brought to the meeting:

- an attempt to accommodate *all* the options would be appealing;
- option (a) produces stressed ministers and potentially inhibits the movement of ministers;
- is there an opportunity to integrate Lay Preachers in ministry teams?
- are there ecumenical opportunities;
- the options should not be mutually exclusive and could be mixed to suit local circumstances;
- this seemed to be a strategy for managing decline;
- the focus was almost entirely on ordained ministry;
- if the purpose is to meet the needs of the church; are there other needs?;
- rural and urban churches have very different needs;
- transformation and the care of the bereaved who are mourning for what they have lost;
- possibility of using retired ministers as a resource - transitioning in a planned way;
- there is a diversification of ministries; make use of the breadth of ministries available.

The meeting adjourned.

Session Seven - Saturday Evening

Ministries. The Revd Peter Poulter continued his report, stating that it would be helpful to hear from synods which group within each synod was responsible for ministerial review. There would be a dip in minister numbers over the next 5 years, and the possibility was being examined of issuing four certificates of eligibility over the next year.

07/87 Ministerial Standards of Conduct (Paper E1)

The Revds Roberta Rominger and Carla Grosch-Miller presented the paper. Following a brief period of group discussion, the following observations were made:

- there were often unexpressed expectations of ministers;
- a good relationship between minister and elders was essential; with ministers receiving pastoral care from elders, where possible;

- there was possible need to add guidelines for churches for circumstances which covered ministers' absences through sickness;
- it was felt that the document could be presented in a more positive way, particularly in terms of ministers serving the wider church;

07/88 Equal Opportunities (paper F)

Miss Morag McLintock presented the report of the Equal Opportunities Committee and sought Mission Council's guidance in implementing the URC's equal opportunities policy, particularly when local churches called ministers.

07/89 Windermere (paper D3)

Mr Ellis had discussed the matter with members and reported that the main themes debated were:

- some think that the Windermere centre is not a good thing - but Assembly has affirmed it as a URC resource;
- many other options for improving the site had already been investigated;
- marketing;
- the investment in purchasing the lease would be a direct financial benefit;
- there were risks involved in this, though doing nothing would also carry a risk;

The Resolution was carried.

The Deputy General Secretary said that the list of members of the Law and Polity group would come to Mission Council in January.

The consensus group. Several names were put forward of individuals who had been involved and were willing to continue in training for the Church in Consensus debate.

The post-moratorium Group. More work would be done in producing terms of reference for this group, which would be circulated to synods to gather names before the January Mission Council.

07/90 Nominations Committee

The Revd Malcolm Hanson presented Paper B1.

Mr Hanson moved Resolution 5:

Mission Council agrees to the appointment of convener, deputy-convener and members of the Mission Committee as set out in the supplementary report of the Nominations Committee.

The Resolution was carried.

Mr Hanson moved Resolution 6

Mission Council authorizes Nominations Committee to complete the list of members of the Mission Committee in time for their service to begin on 1st January 2008.

The Resolution was carried.

Mr Hanson moved Resolution 7

Mission Council agrees to the appointment of a Faith and Order Reference Group on the basis set out in paragraph 8.3 of the Nominations Committee report.

The Resolution was carried

The General Secretary spoke about the role of Conveners on Mission Council. He proposed that those conveners currently serving on Mission Council continue to do so until Assembly 2008. Mission Council agreed.

Worship was led by the Chaplain.

Session Eight - Sunday Morning
Service of Holy Communion

Session Nine - Sunday Morning

07/91 Doctrine, Prayer and Worship (Paper J)

The Revd Richard Mortimer presented the paper 'Our Life Together: The Basis of Our Union'

He gave notice that, with the agreement of the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee, the paper would be introduced as a personal account of mission and not a formal mission statement.

This had the status of a personal reflection which the Committee asked to be made available as a resource document for those studying the URC and its roots.

Discussion:

- would welcome the opportunity for Mission Council to discuss the paper;
- two areas of concern: the report seemed to have been written before *Equipping the Saints*; there was inaccuracy about Lay Preachers;
- there were concerns about the portrayal of CRCW ministry;

Mission Council agreed that Richard Mortimer and Susan Durber should look at documents and return with an opportunity for study. In light of this it was moved.

MC takes note of Dr Robert Pope's paper 'Our Life together...' and encourages the DPW or its successor to publish and promote the paper... Mission Council agreed.

07/92 Communications and Editorial (paper K)

Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe presented paper K.

Today we engaged with many levels of communication simultaneously.

Change and competitiveness in the media. Kirsty outlined developments in Communications, looking particularly at the National Website, the new Central Database, the appointment of Stuart Dew as Media and Press Development Officer, publicity and marketing, Reform and

the search for an editor and sub-editor. It would depend on the appointee whether Reform would be relaunched or a new journal would take its place.

07/93 Assembly Arrangements

William McVey reported that the professional technicians engaged for the Manchester Assembly 2007 had been contracted for Herriot Watt 2008, and that planning for Assemblies 2008 and 2010 was in progress. With regard to details of the consensus decision-making process - training would be offered. Representation – Mr McVey reported that confirmation of the new numbers would be brought to Assembly 2008. Existing Committee conveners who were presenting reports would be members of Assembly 2008.

Mr Mick Barnes proposed that **Assembly membership numbers for 2008 should be as in 2007**. Seconded by Roberta Rominger. The meeting agreed.

Synod Moderators

The Revd Terry Oakley reported on the possibility of an event in the years between General Assemblies. 4 synods were prepared to offer something in 2009 (Thames North, Eastern, East Midlands and West Midlands). Each synod might contribute to a 'float' and patrons could pay for themselves. It was stated that the 2007 Children's Assembly asked this question and would support the idea; Mission Council expressed general support for the idea. Mr Oakley would progress the matter.

07/94 Local Church Model Governing Document - The Clerk

The Clerk presented the paper, stating that it had a number of purposes:

It was needed for dealing with the Charity Commissioners and for Charitable Registration under the new legislation. It was written primarily for people outside the URC who required copies of our constitution. He noted a few deletions and asked Mission Council for general approval so that the document might go to the Charity Commissioners. He requested that Mission Council authorise the Planning Group to make minor changes. The final document would then go to General Assembly.

Mission Council approved as requested.

07/95 Thanks

The Moderator thanked Mrs Katalina Tahaafe-Williams for her service to the URC and the Deputy General Secretary read a note from her.

Carla Grosch-Miller proposed that Mission Council respond with thanks to Katalina. Mission Council agreed.

The Chaplain led closing worship.

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The Deputy General Secretary moved the adoption of Resolution (Paper A):

Resolution

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The Resolution was carried

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Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, notes with gratitude the work already undertaken on the development of the Regeneration Agency, and encourages its further development as part of the mission of the United Reformed Church.

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In discussion the following points were raised:

- it should be clarified that this is a permanent advisory group, not an *ad hoc* task group;
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He highlighted Assembly Resolutions 5 and 5a. In discussion it was noted that:

- the process of electing Assembly Moderators must be finalised by March 2008

The General Secretary suggested that a small group be appointed to consider this. MCAG proposed that the Assembly Moderator the Immediate Past Moderator and two synod representatives would convene to receive submissions and put a proposal to the January Mission Council. In discussion it was further proposed that the Moderator-elect and the Clerk also be part of this group.

Mission Council agreed to the proposed expanded group.

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The General Secretary noted that presentations would be made at all synods at their autumn meetings.

07/75 Nominations Committee - Paper B

The Revd Malcolm Hanson reported, and moved adoption of Resolution 1:

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The Resolution was carried.

Mr Hanson moved adoption of Resolution 2:

Mission Council appoints Ms Francis Brienen as Secretary for Mission from 1st February 2008.

The Resolution was carried

Mr Hanson noted that Mr Simon Rowntree would convene the Group for Appointing a Moderator of the Eastern Synod, and that the Revd Fleur Houston would convene the group for appointing a Secretary for Ecumenical relations and Faith and Order.

Mr Hanson moved adoption of Resolution 3:

Mission Council appoints Ms Isobel Simmons to serve as a trustee forthwith and until Assembly 2010.

The Resolution was carried.

Mr Hanson outlined the principles and process for appointing the Mission Committee.

Mr Hanson noted that General Assembly had asked for a representative committee, which, if all synods sent representatives, would be over twenty-five in number.

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Mission Council agrees to the composition of the Mission Committee as set out in Paragraph 6.7 of the Nominations Committee report.

The Resolution was carried.

The meeting adjourned

Session Two - Friday Evening

07/76 Pastoral Areas

The Revd Rowena Francis led a presentation on Pastoral Areas in the Northern synod.

Evening prayers were led by the Chaplain.

Session Three - Saturday Morning

During morning worship which was led by the Chaplain, the Moderator inducted Mr Frank Kantor as Secretary for Church and Society.

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Mrs Johnston noted all the various groups, committees, individuals and resource materials that had been consulted in the production of the declaration.

She argued that any document produced by Mission Council had to have the effect of causing change in behaviour for the better. The group recommended that a 4-page booklet called *Life Together* be prepared, with gave scenarios, asked questions, encouraged reflection and suggested resources.

In discussion:

- the real issue was about what to do and who to consult when something went wrong;
- this was not good from the viewpoint of criminal law;
- suggestions that churches might write their own declarations should be resisted;
- how could one avoid this becoming just another 'business' item in church meeting rather than becoming an integral part of the church's life?;
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In accordance with the new Standing Orders the Moderator suspended the debate to return to it later, after the report of the Sexual Ethics Steering Group.

07/78 New Synod Structures

The Deputy General Secretary presented Paper G - New Synod Structures, and invited comments on the new synod structures.

Mission Council agreed that Synod Clerks be asked to keep the paper up to date and keep the General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary informed.

07/79 Church and Society

Mr Simon Loveitt presented Paper C. Resolutions would be taken to General Assembly and more would come to the January and March meetings of Mission Council

Mission Council adjourned.

Session Four - Saturday Morning

07/80 Mission Department

Mission Department and Mission Priorities Committee (Paper H)

The Revd Philip Woods introduced Paper H. The Mission Department had been asked to bring a mission programme to General Assembly in 2008. A survey was underway among congregations to determine local priorities and help the Mission Committee discern what was needed and how leadership might best be exercised.

Council divided into groups to discuss paper H

Session Five - Saturday Afternoon

07/81 Emergency Resolution

The Revd Kirsty Thorpe moved an emergency Resolution:

The Mission Council of the United Reformed Church, speaking on behalf of General Assembly, expresses its deep concern for the suffering of the people of Burma and supports the worldwide international demonstrations on October 6th 2007 against the suppression of freedom in that country. It instructs the Mission Department to convey this message to our partner churches in Burma.

Seconded by the Deputy General Secretary, the Resolution was carried.

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The Revd Carla Grosch-Miller moved adoption of the Resolution:

Mission Council welcomes the work of the Resolution 40 task group, and encourages the wide dissemination of its *Life Together* work.

The Resolution was carried.

Mrs Grosch-Miller outlined the background to the work of the Sexual Ethics Steering Group, and presented the Group's report (paper E). She noted the work that had been done on education, training and awareness-raising; caring for victims and survivors; intervention and prevention: policies and procedures. She introduced paper E2, and explained the purpose and processes of the Pastoral Response Team.

In discussion on paper E2:

- pastoral response team would be available whether or not legal proceedings were in process;
- was support available for 'after Pastors'?; the Pastoral Response team would be highly trained and should be able to help with this;
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Mrs Grosch-Miller moved adoption of the Resolution:

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The Resolution was carried.

Mission council considered paper E3 and E3i, 'Policy and Procedure in response to alleged incidents of sexual harassment and abuse against adults.'

Mrs Grosch-Miller responded to a number of comments and questions on papers E3 and E3i and moved the Resolution:

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The Resolution was carried.

Declaration of a Safe Church (paper E5)

Rosemary Johnston outlined options for responding to the revised declaration. Terry Oakley proposed that the new text be taken to General Assembly. Peter Poulter seconded. Rowena Francis suggested that the new text should be made available at Assembly without the Assembly being asked to approve the exact wording.

The Revd Carla Grosch-Miller thanked the church for the opportunity to work on the issues. Mission Council thanked Carla and the group.

Session Six - Saturday afternoon (after tea)

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The Revd Philip Woods commented on the responses from group discussions on the United Reformed Church's mission priorities. Members of Mission Council's comments would be compared and collated with those of local churches, and the result would be presented to the first meeting of the Mission Committee in January, and a report made to Mission Council in March 2008.

The Moderator thanked Philip Woods for his work as International Relations Officer, and wished him well in his new post with the Council for World Mission.

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Mrs Val Morrison presented the report of the Staffing Advisory Group, and moved the resolution:

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The Resolution was carried

07/85 Treasurer's Report

Mr John Ellis presented paper D and proposed:

Mission Council sets the basic stipend for 2008 at £21,060.

The Resolution was carried by a large majority.

Mr Ellis presented paper D1 and moved the Resolution:

Mission Council, acting on behalf of General Assembly, resolves that with respect to the Church's contributions to the United Reformed Church Ministers Pension Fund:

- (i) from 1 November 2007, the active members' monthly stipend to be used in calculating the monthly payments to meet the shortfall in funding will be calculated based on the greater of a) the total active members' stipend roll in force in each particular month, and b) one twelfth of £11,895,208 indexed in line with the percentage increase in the level of a Minister's stipend between 1 January 2006 and the particular month; and**
- (ii) that an additional payment be made to the Fund to make up the difference between the shortfall funding payments made for the period from 1 January 2007 to 31 October 2007 and the payments that would have been made if the formula in (i) above had been in operation during that period.**

The Resolution was carried.

Mr Ellis presented paper D2 and moved the Resolution:

Mission Council accepts the budget for 2008 set out in the attachment to this report.

The Resolution was carried.

Mr Ellis presented paper D3 and moved the Resolution:

Mission Council endorses the proposals set out in paragraphs 11-14 [of paper D3] above and instructs the Finance Committee, in conjunction with the Education and Learning Committee, to undertake the necessary detailed negotiations on behalf of the Church.

After discussion it was agreed that those with concerns should meet with the Treasurer before the Resolution was formally addressed.

07/86 Ministries Committee

The Revd Peter Poulter presented the report of the Ministries Committee (paper L). Mission Council split into small groups to consider the options on page 3 of paper L. After group discussion, the following points were brought to the meeting:

- an attempt to accommodate *all* the options would be appealing;
- option (a) produces stressed ministers and potentially inhibits the movement of ministers;
- is there an opportunity to integrate Lay Preachers in ministry teams?
- are there ecumenical opportunities;
- the options should not be mutually exclusive and could be mixed to suit local circumstances;
- this seemed to be a strategy for managing decline;
- the focus was almost entirely on ordained ministry;
- if the purpose is to meet the needs of the church; are there other needs?;
- rural and urban churches have very different needs;
- transformation and the care of the bereaved who are mourning for what they have lost;
- possibility of using retired ministers as a resource - transitioning in a planned way;
- there is a diversification of ministries; make use of the breadth of ministries available.

The meeting adjourned.

Session Seven - Saturday Evening

Ministries. The Revd Peter Poulter continued his report, stating that it would be helpful to hear from synods which group within each synod was responsible for ministerial review. There would be a dip in minister numbers over the next 5 years, and the possibility was being examined of issuing four certificates of eligibility over the next year.

07/87 Ministerial Standards of Conduct (Paper E1)

The Revds Roberta Rominger and Carla Grosch-Miller presented the paper. Following a brief period of group discussion, the following observations were made:

- there were often unexpressed expectations of ministers;
- a good relationship between minister and elders was essential; with ministers receiving pastoral care from elders, where possible;

- there was possible need to add guidelines for churches for circumstances which covered ministers' absences through sickness;
- it was felt that the document could be presented in a more positive way, particularly in terms of ministers serving the wider church;

07/88 Equal Opportunities (paper F)

Miss Morag McLintock presented the report of the Equal Opportunities Committee and sought Mission Council's guidance in implementing the URC's equal opportunities policy, particularly when local churches called ministers.

07/89 Windermere (paper D3)

Mr Ellis had discussed the matter with members and reported that the main themes debated were:

- some think that the Windermere centre is not a good thing - but Assembly has affirmed is as URC resource;
- many other options for improving the site had already been investigated;
- marketing;
- the investment in purchasing the lease would be a direct financial benefit;
- there were risks involved in this, though doing nothing would also carry a risk;

The Resolution was carried.

The Deputy General Secretary said that the list of members of the Law and Polity group would come to Mission Council in January.

The consensus group. Several names were put forward of individuals who had been involved and were willing to continue in training for the Church in Consensus debate.

The post-moratorium Group. More work would be done in producing terms of reference for this group, which would be circulated to synods to gather names before the January Mission Council .

07/90 Nominations Committee

The Revd Malcolm Hanson presented Paper B1.

Mr Hanson moved Resolution 5:

Mission Council agrees to the appointment of convener, deputy-convener and members of the Mission Committee as set out in the supplementary report of the Nominations Committee.

The Resolution was carried.

Mr Hanson moved Resolution 6

Mission Council authorizes Nominations Committee to complete the list of members of the Mission Committee in time for their service to begin on 1st January 2008.

The Resolution was carried.

Mr Hanson moved Resolution 7

Mission Council agrees to the appointment of a Faith and Order Reference Group on the basis set out in paragraph 8.3 of the Nominations Committee report.

The Resolution was carried

The General Secretary spoke about the role of Conveners on Mission Council. He proposed that those conveners currently serving on Mission Council continue to do so until Assembly 2008. Mission Council agreed.

Worship was led by the Chaplain.

Session Eight - Sunday Morning
Service of Holy Communion

Session Nine - Sunday Morning

07/91 Doctrine, Prayer and Worship (Paper J)

The Revd Richard Mortimer presented the paper 'Our Life Together: The Basis of Our Union'

He gave notice that, with the agreement of the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee, the paper would be introduced as a personal account of mission and not a formal mission statement.

This had the status of a personal reflection which the Committee asked to be made available as a resource document for those studying the URC and its roots.

Discussion:

- would welcome the opportunity for Mission Council to discuss the paper;
- two areas of concern: the report seemed to have been written before *Equipping the Saints*; there was inaccuracy about Lay Preachers;
- there were concerns about the portrayal of CRCW ministry;

Mission Council agreed that Richard Mortimer and Susan Durber should look at documents and return with an opportunity for study. In light of this it was moved.

MC takes note of Dr Robert Pope's paper 'Our Life together...' and encourages the DPW or its successor to publish and promote the paper... Mission Council agreed.

07/92 Communications and Editorial (paper K)

Revd Dr Kirsty Thorpe presented paper K.

Today we engaged with many levels of communication simultaneously.

Change and competitiveness in the media. Kirsty outlined developments in Communications, looking particularly at the National Website, the new Central Database, the appointment of Stuart Dew as Media and Press Development Officer, publicity and marketing, Reform and

the search for an editor and sub-editor. It would depend on the appointee whether Reform would be relaunched or a new journal would take its place.

07/93 Assembly Arrangements

William McVey reported that the professional technicians engaged for the Manchester Assembly 2007 had been contracted for Herriot Watt 2008, and that planning for Assemblies 2008 and 2010 was in progress. With regard to details of the consensus decision-making process - training would be offered. Representation – Mr McVey reported that confirmation of the new numbers would be brought to Assembly 2008. Existing Committee conveners who were presenting reports would be members of Assembly 2008.

Mr Mick Barnes proposed that **Assembly membership numbers for 2008 should be as in 2007**. Seconded by Roberta Rominger. The meeting agreed.

Synod Moderators

The Revd Terry Oakley reported on the possibility of an event in the years between General Assemblies. 4 synods were prepared to offer something in 2009 (Thames North, Eastern, East Midlands and West Midlands). Each synod might contribute to a 'float' and patrons could pay for themselves. It was stated that the 2007 Children's Assembly asked this question and would support the idea; Mission Council expressed general support for the idea. Mr Oakley would progress the matter.

07/94 Local Church Model Governing Document - The Clerk

The Clerk presented the paper, stating that it had a number of purposes:

It was needed for dealing with the Charity Commissioners and for Charitable Registration under the new legislation. It was written primarily for people outside the URC who required copies of our constitution. He noted a few deletions and asked Mission Council for general approval so that the document might go to the Charity Commissioners. He requested that Mission Council authorise the Planning Group to make minor changes. The final document would then go to General Assembly.

Mission Council approved as requested.

07/95 Thanks

The Moderator thanked Mrs Katalina Tahaafe-Williams for her service to the URC and the Deputy General Secretary read a note from her.

Carla Grosch-Miller proposed that Mission Council respond with thanks to Katalina. Mission Council agreed.

The Chaplain led closing worship.



The
United
Reformed
Church

The United Reformed Church

86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT, United Kingdom
Deputy General Secretary: The Revd Raymond Adams

To: Members of Mission Council
and staff in attendance

29th August 2007

Mission Council: 5-7 October 2007
Ushaw College, Durham
Telephone 0191 373 8502

I write to remind you that Mission Council will meet in Durham in less than five weeks' time. To ensure that our arrangements are completed in time, I would ask you to supply us with the information we need about your requirements for accommodation, meals and transport.

It would be very helpful if you could reply within a week of your receiving this letter. Responses by enclosed form, e-mail (krystyna.pullen@urc.org.uk), telephone (020 7916 8646) or fax (020 7916 2021) are very welcome.

Enclosed are some preliminary papers:

- directions to Ushaw College, Durham
- a list of members (to help people plan to share transport, where possible)
- an expense slip (to be completed and placed in the labelled box in the hall)
- background information about Mission Council
- a form about your accommodation and meal requests, and certain other necessary information.

1. Registration at Ushaw College will take place from 2.30 p.m. on Friday 5th. Tea will be served from 3.30 p.m. and the first session of Mission Council will commence at 4 p.m. For those arriving in Durham by train, we plan to arrange for minibuses to meet the 14.17 from Edinburgh; and the 14.29 from London. Please indicate on the form if you wish to take advantage of the minibus service.

If there are any problems caused by trains being late or people arriving by train at other times, you are asked to share a taxi to Ushaw College (about three miles from Durham railway station). Taxis and minibuses should be paid for directly, and claims should be submitted (with receipts) alongside other expense claims to Krystyna Pullen. Please deposit the Expense Forms by morning coffee time on Sunday in the box marked "Expenses" which will be on the table with other papers in the main meeting hall or just outside it.

2. There are no bedrooms on the ground floor at Ushaw College, but there is a lift to the first floor. If you have a mobility problem, and would like to be allocated a room near the lift or a toilet, please indicate on the form. Not all rooms are en-suite but towels and soap are provided.

3. You are invited to volunteer to be a group leader and/or reporter for the year 2007-08. If a sufficient number of people take their turn, no one should have to volunteer for more than once in the year.

The agenda and papers will be sent out in time to arrive with you about one week before the meeting.

4. Mission Council has already agreed to change the pattern and timing of meetings during 2008. Thus, Saturday 26 January 2008 will be the last time we shall have a single-day meeting at The Arthur Rank Centre, Stoneleigh, Warwickshire. Thereafter we shall move to a bi-annual pattern of meetings:

Friday 7- Sunday 9 March at All Saints Pastoral Centre, London Colney; and

Tuesday 2nd - Thursday 4th December at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick.

2009 dates and venues are:

15th- 17th May at Ushaw College, Durham; and 16th - 18th November at the Hayes Conference Centre, Swanwick.

I look forward to seeing you in Durham on October 5th

With good wishes.

Yours sincerely



pp The Revd Ray Adams
Deputy General Secretary

Encs



Mission Council

what we are about

This paper is written particularly with those new to Mission Council in mind.

The original vision

This was set out in the Reports to the Assembly of 1992.

"The purpose of the Mission Council is to enable the Church, in its General Assembly, to take a more comprehensive view of the activity and the policy of the Church, to decide more carefully about priorities and to encourage the outreach of the Church to the community.

Its service is directly towards the Assembly, but its concern is with the whole church and all its members, so it will seek to be aware of the pains and joys, the adventures and hopes of the whole body. As the Assembly is representative of the whole Church, so the Mission Council will listen to and will serve the local churches, to help them in their missionary vocation.

It is a Mission Council and so the aim it will have in mind is to ensure that all we undertake centrally and all we are as a denomination is directed towards the mission of God in the world, towards that Kingdom of justice, peace, forgiveness and hope which is true life and which Christ brings in his person.

The Council will ask, is this programme, this appointment, this budget, this grant, this statement designed to further the overall mission, or simply to maintain our human structures of institutional life? It is by such criteria that priorities will have to be assessed, not only when new work is proposed but as the existing work of the church is reviewed".

The members

Each of the 13 synods are represented by 4 people, including its Moderator. These 52 people form the main body of the membership. The other significant group of members is the 14 Conveners of Assembly standing committees. FURY Council has 2 representatives. Finally, the Assembly officers and certain other officers of the Church are members. This currently adds up to a total of 77 but the actual membership is slightly less as a few people are members in more than one category.

In attendance

The number present at any Council meeting is usually around 90. This is because a number of members of staff and other consultants are present to advise the conveners and the Council itself. Whilst they do not have a vote and can only speak with permission, those in this category participate in group work and in many ways play a very important part in the life of the Council.

Paper

There are normally 2 mailings before each Council. The first contains practical information about the Council and may include other reports if they are ready. The second contains the

agenda and timetable, and (as far as possible) all other papers to be considered by the Council. You need to build reading time into your diary in the week before every meeting!

Meetings

The Council meets 3 times a year, in October and March residentially for 48 hours, in January for a full Saturday. The meetings relate very much to the General Assembly: in October we take up any matters referred by Assembly, in January we begin to look ahead to the next one, and in March we focus on the Assembly in the following July. Our input also comes from committees of Assembly, which may want advice or decision, from the task groups we appoint and from the synods. In practice, time taken by the first two of these categories has often been to the detriment of the third. A conscious attempt is being made to discern the Church's mission agenda as much through the experience and insights of local churches, districts and synods as through Assembly committees and Mission Council task groups.

Style of meeting

Worship and Bible Study are central to our meeting. They are the responsibility of the Moderator and her/his Chaplain. Much of the time we meet in plenary session, with the Moderator in the chair and the Clerk keeping us in order. Normal rules for the conduct of business apply, although hopefully we can usually be more informal than an Assembly. It helps if speakers identify themselves. We use small groups in a variety of ways: through fixed group sessions, and informal buzz groups. Our normal practice is to change the membership of groups for each meeting. The style of our working together is most affected by the opportunity for informal conversations at coffee breaks and meal times.

Advice

Advice is welcome from all quarters but Mission Council has 3 standing Advisory Groups. Mission Council Advisory Group (MCAG) plans the agenda and necessary follow up, and provides support for the Moderator and General Secretary. The Staffing Advisory Group (SAG) considers staff posts due to become vacant and proposals for new posts, and brings appropriate recommendations to Mission Council through RPAG. The Grants and Loans Group considers and co-ordinates central grants. It makes an annual report to Mission Council. Elections to these groups normally take place at the March meeting, although casual vacancies have to be filled from time to time.

Making Connections

All this is about what happens at Mission Council. Whilst at their best our meetings are "aware of the pains and joys, the adventures and hopes of the whole body", to many in the Church, Mission Council seems very remote. Therefore a key role of the synod representatives in particular is to act as channels of communication, before and after meetings, and in both directions.

Administration

The administration and planning of Mission Council is the responsibility of the Deputy General Secretary, to whom all reasonable comments and questions may be addressed.

Ray Adams
Revised 2005



Worship from!
The United Reformed Church

86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT, United Kingdom
Deputy General Secretary: **The Revd Raymond Adams**

To: Members of Mission Council
and staff in attendance

29th August 2007

Mission Council: 5-7 October 2007
Ushaw College, Durham
Telephone 0191 373 8502

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With good wishes.

Yours sincerely

The Revd Ray Adams
Deputy General Secretary

Encs

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MISSION COUNCIL

5 – 7 OCTOBER 2007

MEMBERS & REPRESENTATIVES

The Moderator
General Secretary
Deputy General Secretary
Clerk

Rev Prof Stephen Orchard
Rev Dr David Cornick
Rev Ray Adams
Rev James Breslin

Past Moderator
Moderator Elect
Treasurer
Legal Adviser

Rev Elizabeth Caswell
Rev John Marsh
Mr John Ellis
Mrs Janet Knott

Assembly Standing Committees

Assembly Arrangements
Church & Society
Communications & Editorial
Doctrine Prayer & Worship
Ecumenical
Education & Learning
Equal Opportunities
Finance
Inter-Faith Relations
Life & Witness
Ministries
Nominations
Racial Justice
Youth & Children's Work

Mr William McVey
Mr Simon Loveitt
Rev Dr Kirsty Thorpe
Rev Dr Susan Durber
Rev Elizabeth Nash
Prof Malcolm Johnson
Ms Morag McLintock
Mr John Ellis
Rev Peter Colwell
Rev Peter Ball
Rev Peter Poulter
Rev Malcolm Hanson
Rev Carla Grosch-Miller
Rev Neil Thorogood

Fury Council

Mr Andrew Littlejohns (Moderator)
Miss Sara Paton

13 synod Moderators, plus 3 representatives from each synod

1 N	Rev Rowena Francis	Miss Elaine Colechin	Rev John Durell	
2 N.W	Rev Richard Church	Rev Rachel Poolman	Ms Marie Trubic	Rev Alan Wickens
3 Mer	Rev Howard Sharp	Rev Jenny Morgan		Mr Donald Swift
4 York	Rev Arnold Harrison	Mr Roderick Garthwaite	Rev Pauline Loosemore	Mrs Val Morrison
5 E.M	Rev Terry Oakley	Rev Jane Campbell	Mrs Margaret Gateley	Mrs Irene Wren
6 W.M	Rev Elizabeth Welch	Mrs Adella Pritchard	Rev Anthony Howells	Mr Bill Robson/Dr Tony Jeans
7 E	Rev Elizabeth Caswell	Mr Mick Barnes	Mrs Joan Turner	Rev Cecil White
8 S.W	Rev David Grosch-Miller	Mrs Janet Gray	Rev Roz Harrison	Rev Stephen Newell
9 Wex	Rev Adrian Bulley	Rev G Cliff Bembridge	<i>Mrs Margaret Telford</i>	Mr Peter Pay
10 Th.N	Rev Roberta Rominger	Mr David Eldridge	Rev John Macaulay	Rev David Varcoe
11 S	Rev Nigel Uden	Dr Graham Campling	Mrs Maureen Lawrence	Mr Nigel Macdonald
12 Wal	Rev Peter Noble		Mrs Barbara Shapland	Mrs Liz Tadd
13 Scot	Rev John Humphreys	Miss Irene Hudson	Rev Alan Paterson	Mr Patrick Smyth

In attendance

Minute Secretary
Moderator's Chaplain
Children's Work Dev't Officer
Church & Society
Church Related Community Work
Communications
Ecumenical Relations
Education & Learning
Finance
Grants & Loans

Rev Ken Forbes
Rev Lucy Brierley
Miss Jo Williams
Mr Frank Kantor
Mrs Suzanne Adofo/
Mr Stephen Summers
Rev Martin Hazell
Rev Richard Mortimer
Rev Roy Lowes
Mr Andrew Grimwade
Dr Brian Woodhall

HR & Facilities
International Relations
Life & Witness
Ministries
Pilots Development
Press Officer
Racial Justice
Rural Consultancy
Windermere Centre
Youth Work

Ms Michelle Marcano
Rev Philip Woods
Rev Christine Craven
Mrs Karen Bulley
Mr Stuart Dew
Mrs Katalina Tahaafe-Williams
Rev Graham Jones
Mr Lawrence Moore
Mr John Brown



The
United
Reformed
Church

The United Reformed Church

86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT, United Kingdom
Deputy General Secretary: The Revd Raymond Adams

To: Members of Mission Council
and staff in attendance

26th September 2007

Mission Council: 5-7 October 2007
Ushaw College, Durham
Telephone 0191 373 8502

Dear Colleague,

This is the second mailing of papers for Mission Council which meets in Durham on 5th October. (The first mailing, which was sent out on 29th August, enclosed information about accommodation, meals and transport, included directions to Ushaw College, a list of members, and background information about Mission Council. If you did not receive these, please contact Krystyna Pullen immediately - krystyna.pullen@urc.org.uk - or tel: 020 7916 8646).

Please find enclosed the following papers:

- The Agenda
- The list of Discussion Groups
- Additional Minute from the March Mission Council
- Papers A, A1, A2, A3, B, C, D, D1, D2, D3, E, E1, E2, E3, E3i, F, and G.
- Other papers referred to on the Agenda (H, J, K, L) will be tabled at the meeting.

Please remember to bring with you

- All the agenda papers
- Minutes of the March 2007 meeting
- A Bible.

(The words of the hymns will be projected on a screen)

It is unavoidable that some papers will be circulated at the meeting, rather than being sent out with this mailing. We have tried to put them later in the agenda so that there will be the opportunity to read them in advance of their presentation.

We look forward to welcoming a number of new synod representatives to Mission Council, and hope that the balance in the agenda of worship, presentations, formal and informal discussions will give everyone the opportunity to feel that

they have contributed, as we all share our experience of faith and our insights about the life and mission of the Church.

With good wishes.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ray Adams". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "R".

The Revd Ray Adams
Deputy General Secretary

Encs

telephone: +44 (0) 20 7916 2020

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email: ray.adams@urc.org.uk

direct line telephone: +44 (0) 20 7916 8646

direct line fax: +44 (0) 20 7916 1928

MISSION COUNCIL

5 – 7 OCTOBER 2007

GROUPS

The first named person is asked to act as group leader and the second named person in each group as reporter

<p style="text-align: center;">A</p> <p>Roderick Garthwaite Kirsty Thorpe Mick Barnes Cliff Bembridge John Durell Carla Grosch-Miller Arnold Harrison Frank Kantor Janet Knott Roy Lowes</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">B</p> <p>Terry Oakley Margaret Gateley Lucy Brierley Elaine Colechin Stuart Dew David Grosch-Miller Graham Jones Simon Loveitt Nigel Macdonald John Marsh</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">C</p> <p>Val Morrison Peter Ball Anthea Coates David Cornick Christine Craven Simon Fairington John Humphreys Malcolm Johnson Andrew Littlejohns Rachel Poolman</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">D</p> <p>Jennifer Morgan Graham Campling James Breslin Peter Colwell Bill Robson Maureen Lawrence Peter Noble Margaret Telfer Marie Trubic Philip Woods</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">E</p> <p>Alan Wickens Irene Wren Adrian Bulley David Eldridge Peter Etwell Richard Mortimer Stephen Orchard Patrick Smyth Joan Turner Elizabeth Welch</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">F</p> <p>Elizabeth Caswell Donald Swift Ray Adams Rowena Francis Peter Pay Peter Poulter Adella Pritchard John Sanderson Steve Summers Liz Tadd</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">G</p> <p>Morag McLintock Roberta Rominger John Brown Richard Church George Faris Ken Forbes Malcolm Hanson Martin Hazell Barbara Shapland Cecil White</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">H</p> <p>Elizabeth Nash John Ellis Janet Gray Michelle Marcano Howard Sharp Neil Thorogood William McVey Nigel Uden David Varcoe</p>

MISSION COUNCIL
5-7 October 2007

**AGENDA AND
TIMETABLE**

The General Assembly has agreed that every agenda should be headed with the question, what are the ecumenical implications of this agenda?

FRIDAY 5th

Arrivals from 2.30 p.m. Tea is served from 3.15 p.m.

4.00 p.m.

Session 1

Opening Worship and Bible Study
Welcome to guests and new members
Apologies for absence

Lucy Brierley (Chaplain)
The Moderator

Introduction to Mission Council and notice of any additional business

Deputy General Secretary

Minutes of Mission Council held 23-25 March 2007 (noting the supplementary Minute submitted by the Listed Building Advisory Group)

Matters arising

(Matters arising from 2007 General Assembly* included in Report of MCAG)

Report of the Mission Council Advisory Group

PAPER A

Deputy General Secretary

Papers introduced by the General Secretary

Regeneration Agency*

PAPER A1

Law and Polity Advisory Group

PAPER A2

Think Tank*

PAPER A3

Election of Moderator of Assembly*

PAPER A3

Report on Vision4 Life*

The General Secretary

Nominations Committee Report

PAPER B

Malcolm Hanson (Convener)

Church and Society Committee Report

PAPER C

Simon Loveitt (Convener)

Assembly Arrangements Committee Report

William McVey (Convener)

6.30 p.m.

Dinner

7.45 p.m.

Session 2

Pastoral Areas in the Northern synod - *a presentation led by Rowena Francis*

9.00 p.m.

Evening Prayers

The Chaplain

SATURDAY 6th

- 8.30a.m. *Breakfast*
- 9.15 a.m. Session 3
Morning Worship (includes the induction of Mr Frank Kantor as Secretary for Church and Society)
Report of Resolution 40 Task Group *Rosemary Johnston (Convener)*
(followed by informal group discussion)
- Developing new Synod Structures - overview **PAPER G**
- 10.45 a.m. *Coffee*
- 11.15 a.m. Session 4
Mission Department and Mission Priorities Committee **PAPER H**
(to be tabled)
The General Secretary and Philip Woods (Secretary for International Relations)
- Followed by discussions in Groups
- 12.30 p.m. *Lunch*
- 2.30 p.m. Session 5
- Report of the Sexual Ethics Steering Group **PAPER E**
Carla Grosch-Miller (Convener)
- Policy on sexual harassment **PAPER E3**
Summary and Flow Chart **PAPER E3i**
Proposals for a Pastoral Response Team **PAPER E2**
- 3.45 p.m. *Tea*
4. 15p.m. Session 6
Staffing Advisory Group Report *Val Morrison (Convener)*
- The Treasurer's Report *John Ellis (Hon Treasurer and Convener of the Finance Committee)*
- 2008 Stipends **PAPER D**
Pension Contributions **PAPER D1**
The 2008 Budget **PAPER D2**
Windermere Centre Development **PAPER D3**
- Follow up on Group Discussion on Mission Priorities
The General Secretary and Philip Woods
- Ministries Committee Report *Peter Poulter (Convener)*
Ministerial Development
Challenge to the Church **PAPER L**
(to be tabled)

6.30p.m. *Dinner*

7.30 p.m. Session 7
 Ministerial Standards of Conduct PAPER E1
Discussion led by Carla Grosch Miller

Equal Opportunities Committee Report PAPER F
Discussion led by Morag McLintock (Convener)

9.00p.m. *Evening Prayers*

SUNDAY 7th

8.30 a.m. *Breakfast*

9.15 a.m. *Service of Holy Communion*

10.15 a.m. *Coffee*

10.45 a.m. Session 9
 Doctrine Prayer and Worship Committee: *Richard Mortimer (Secretary)*
 Papers on Ecclesiology of the United Reformed Church
PAPER J (J1) (to be tabled)

Communications and Editorial Report and discussion *Kirsty Thorpe (Convener)*
PAPER K (to be tabled)

Any additional or remaindered items

12.10 p.m. *Closing worship*

12.30 p.m. *Lunch and Departures*



**MISSION COUNCIL
5-7 October 2007**

A

Mission Council Advisory Group

1. Correction to the March Mission Council Minutes:

07/23 Welcome: "Margaret Ward (West Midlands Synod)" should read "Margaret Marshall (West Midlands Synod)".

2. March Mission Council agreed that the following resolution be taken by Ministries Committee to General Assembly. Through an oversight, the resolution was omitted from the Book of Reports. Mission Council is invited to agree the resolution, acting on behalf of General Assembly.

Resolution (M2)

Duty to Consider (Amendment)

General Assembly reaffirms its policy that Ministers in full time stipendiary service should normally retire in the month of their 65th birthday but resolves that with the agreement of the synod and of the pastorate/post concerned this retirement may be deferred for a period of up to six months.

For the avoidance of doubt, General Assembly reaffirms its decision of 2006, Resolution 26 'Duty to Consider' extension of full-time stipendiary service, for cases where a minister wishes to extend a period of full-time service beyond the six months after his or her 65th birthday.

Background:

- i) In 1993 Assembly resolved that ministers must retire not later than six months after their 65th birthday.
- ii) In 1997 Assembly added to this permission a procedure which allowed ministers to extend full time service for a maximum 3 years in exceptional circumstances.
- iii) In 2002 Assembly resolved that ministers should retire in the month of their 65th birthday unless agreement under the current procedures had already been reached or there were exceptional circumstances which allowed for an extension of up to 3 years under the 1997 resolution.
- iv) In 2006 the 'Duty to Consider' resolution removed the need for exceptional circumstances to accompany the request for an extension to full time service beyond 65.
- v) Since the 2006 resolution requests for extensions have been for periods of less than six months. The Ministries suggests that for such short periods of extended service the resolution of 1993 should be reinstated. This allowed the minister and pastorate to come to a local agreement on a suitable date for retirement, which fitted in with an individual pastorate's timetable.
- vi) Under such an agreement the Ministries Committee would require a letter from the minister giving the actual date of retirement together with a supporting letter from the pastorate and

- Synod to be sent to the Ministries committee. This notification would follow receipt of the Duty to Consider letter sent to ministers at the time of their 64th birthday.
- vii) If a minister wishes to continue in full time service for longer than six months after his/her 65th birthday then the 2006 'Duty to Consider' procedure must be followed.

3. Matters from the 2007 General Assembly requiring Mission Council action

Catch the Vision

Assembly Resolution 1:

General Assembly instructs Mission Council and the Nominations Committee to do such further work as is necessary to create a 'think-tank' on mission and spirituality.

- See Paper A3

Restructuring

Assembly Resolution 3:

General Assembly instructs Mission Council to bring proposals for the Mission Department's work programme to the 2008 Assembly.

- Action is required by January and March 2008 Mission Councils

Assembly Resolution 4:

General Assembly instructs Mission Council to arrange for a review of the working of the Mission Department in January 2010 and to report its findings and recommendations to the 2010 Assembly.

- No immediate action is required

Post Moratorium on Human Sexuality

Assembly Resolution 45:

General Assembly calls for further detailed discussions on aspects of human sexuality to be initiated in the light of the Catch the Vision Process, with guidance from Mission Council and in the spirit of the Commitment.

Assembly Resolution 47:

General Assembly asks Mission Council to set up a task group to oversee the process of addressing issues of human sexuality, particularly those set out in the report, and to enable the process of widening discussions to involve the whole church.

The report which accompanied these resolutions from Mission Council to General Assembly sought to build on the good spirit which has developed across a broad spectrum of the Church in discussions about spirituality, and to take it into the next phase of discussions on human sexuality. MCAG believes that the initial task facing Mission Council is to decide how to share Assembly's decision with the wider church and to consider how to tackle outstanding matters in the report (pages 9-11): e.g. theology, processes used by other European churches, advocacy, standards in ministry, discipline, conscience, stereotyping, practical implications of diversity, pastoral issues and matters of a legal nature. A long-term task group is needed to study and analyse the new environment in which same-sex relationships and traditional views of ethics and fidelity exist side by side. Mission Council is asked, therefore, to consider setting up a group (with a significant weighting towards younger members who are familiar with the new social environment) and to offer names of those who might be approached, with a view to the group being established and working by March 08 Mission Council.

Consensus Decision-making

Assembly Resolution 50:

- 1) General Assembly resolves that:

- a) from the close of Assembly 2007 it shall adopt a system of decision making by consensus in addition to the process of making decisions by majority voting.
 - b) All discussion and decisions will begin by using consensus procedures except the election of the Moderator of the General Assembly and matters covered by sections 3(1) & (2)
- 2) General Assembly resolves to amend the Standing Orders of General Assembly by adding a new section 2 and renumbering the current sections 2 to 12 as 3 to 13.

MCAG discussed a paper submitted by Elizabeth Nash asking how the Assembly resolution could be taken forward. It was thought that this should be done initially in consultation with the Assembly Arrangements Committee, which should be asked to bring a further report to Mission Council in time for the 2008 General Assembly.

Assembly Moderators

Assembly Resolution 5a:

General Assembly asks Mission Council to review the whole process for the nomination and election of Moderators of General Assembly.

- See Paper A3

4. The Windermere Centre: The Windermere Centre has an Advisory Group and a Management Group. The Advisory Group, which is a sub-committee of the Life and Witness Committee is (quoting its Constitution) "responsible for the direct oversight and development of the Centre, including building alterations, staffing changes, financial budgets and accounts, relationships with Carver URC (adjacent to the Centre), the annual Centre programme and all major decisions affecting the Centre. The Group (offers) support and guidance to the Director in the strategic development of the Centre and the Director (is) accountable to the Group for all areas of Centre policy."

As a result of restructuring it is proposed that the Windermere Centre comes under the oversight of the Education and Learning Committee, with the Windermere Advisory Group (WAG) reporting to it.

There are several strands which need to be brought together:

- o Proposals about the Centre's development are explained in Paper D3, which suggest that Mission Council should not initiate the next 5-yearly review (due in 2007) at this time.
- o a considerable amount of work is being done, and a momentum has gathered in recent months, involving WAG, the Finance Committee, the Finance and HR departments in Church House concerning staffing structures and the improvement of accounting systems. It is thought that this momentum should not be held up by a large scale review.
- o the Staffing Advisory Group, however, has a round of five-yearly reviews of Assembly-appointed staff, and was awaiting the Centre's review before reviewing the Centre Director.

It is proposed therefore to defer a full-scale review (Paper D3) pending present developments, but to ask the Education and Learning Committee to initiate an internal review as part of its integration of the Windermere Centre into its strategy for Resource Centres for Learning.

Mission Council is therefore invited

- o to approve the transfer of responsibility from Life and Witness to the Education and Learning Committee,
- o to agree to the Education and Learning Committee initiating an internal review of the Centre in the

next 12-18 months (to be reported to Mission Council.) outlining its anticipated role within the strategy presented in the Training Review 2006 and agreed by Assembly.

5. Proposal about the future of the Stewardship sub-committee: Mission Council is invited to agree that the Stewardship sub-committee (at present a sub-committee of the Life and Witness Committee) become a sub-committee of the Finance Committee. It is also asked to approve that existing members of the sub-committee, who wished to continue, join those members appointed by the Finance Committee.



MISSION COUNCIL
5-7 October 2007

PAPER A
Supplementary

Extract from "Moratorium on policy decisions on
Homosexuality General Assembly 2007: Document 2
pages 9-11

8. Ways of working

8.1 In the period after Assembly, if Assembly accepts these proposals, it might be good for synods and local churches to reflect on the Commitment, and to identify themselves with its spirit and intention.

8.2 Also in this period, time needs to be allowed for the relevant work of the Catch the Vision process to be completed and assimilated into the life of the Church.

8.3 It is a clear conviction that the process of further discussion needs to take place without the pressure of deadlines. While there may be need to come to some conclusions, and this process cannot be entirely open-ended, discussion might well be hindered rather than helped by the imposition of a timetable. It is imperative that the whole church is given space to be and to reflect.

8.4 In order for further work to be coordinated and be moved forward, it would be advisable for a small group, perhaps a task group of Mission Council, to have responsibility for overseeing the process and ensuring that discussions are held with the appropriate people and ecumenically.

8.5 One of the first things the group might be asked to do is to review the processes used in similar discussions by some other churches, such as the Church of Sweden and the French Reformed Church, and to consider these as models for our own use. We might also want to learn from the methods of those who have encouraged "conflict transformation".

8.6 The group might usefully gather and publish accessible materials covering the diverse range of subjects and views which would be of help to small groups and local churches.

8.7 The group would be responsible for considering how best to deal with the issues listed below, how discussions might take place and with whom – whether by special groups, ecumenically or by existing committees – and how local churches and the councils of the church might also be involved. The group would coordinate this work and report back to Mission Council.

9. Some issues to be explored further

Mission Council recognises that as well as the range of issues considered in the report of 1999, there are many related, often complex and significant issues which need to be explored in more depth and in a constructive atmosphere, and in terms of the processes set out above (section 8). In outline some of these are –

9.1 Theology

Among several theological issues to be addressed, a coherent and comprehensive theology of same-sex partnerships is urgently needed as a basis for any further decisions. (A number of the following points depend on establishing a clear theological framework.) Ideally, as with earlier work, this should be set within the context of human sexuality, marriage and relationships in general as well as our understanding of gender.

9.2 Advocacy

Related to this is the need for clarity about the church's teaching on matters of sexual relationships. What do we actually affirm and teach about marriage, singleness, celibacy and same-sex relationships, for instance? Within this, how does the church cope with two incompatible sets of teaching, one of which says that same-sex practice is wrong and the other of which says that it can be life affirming? Do we say that our church teaches both?

9.3 Standards in ministry

What are acceptable patterns of life within ordained ministry? What standards are expected of ministers and members in relation to different expressions of sexuality? How are we to understand a minister's promise to lead a holy life?

9.4 Discipline

Recognising that there are ordained ministers within the church in openly same-sex relationships, are they under similar disciplinary constraints as heterosexual and single ministers? If so, what do we understand those constraints to be?

9.5 Legal implications

Some recent legislation carries implications for the church. These need to be reviewed both in terms of what is required of the church and the church's own response. It would be good to do this work ecumenically, and particularly in the light of recent work in the Methodist Church.

9.6 Blessing of partnerships

What attitude should the United Reformed Church take regarding the blessing of civil partnerships? Do the present guidelines need to be reviewed, and should they be subject to debate and decision in General Assembly?

9.7 Unity

Believing that the unity of the church is a gospel priority, how much internal diversity is tolerable before that unity is contradicted? Clearly there is much diversity within the present church over many issues, but would it ever be acceptable in the name of unity to have such a diversity of beliefs and practices that members and ministers denied the actions and beliefs of others and where some ministers were totally unacceptable in some parts of the church? (Methodist Conference in 2005 asked that its "Faith and Order Committee should reflect upon the theological implications of being a Church that has to live or contend with different and mutually contradictory convictions." We need to address the same question from our own perspective.)

9.8 Practical implications of diversity

We need to look carefully at the implications of the kind of diversity envisaged in the previous point. Might the acceptance of mutually exclusive interpretations living side by side lead all too painfully to the "clustering" of churches and ministers of similar views? What does it mean for a minister to be called locally but recognised nationally, particularly if different criteria seem to be used in different parts of the church? Might some candidates for ministry and some existing ministers seeking pastorates need to look for areas of the country where they might be more readily accepted than in others? If such pressures arise, how do we maintain the integrity of the church?

9.9 Conscience

What are the implications of personal conscience in this area? For example, what freedom do individuals and congregations have to reject the ministries of those whose attitudes or lifestyles are not acceptable to them?

9.10 Stereotyping

How do we overcome the dangers of stereotyping, which need to be challenged wherever they come from?

9.11 Pastoral issues

How should the church respond to those whose orientation is other than heterosexual and those in same-sex relationships and civil partnerships? How should the church respond to those who find such relationships and partnerships unacceptable and offensive in a Christian context? There is also potential for a wide range of issues of principle to arise from pastoral situations. Such things as a person's reorientation of gender could affect a minister. Situations like this need to be looked at now so that when they do arise they can be addressed with understanding and care.



MISSION COUNCIL
5-7 October 2007

A1

The Regeneration Agency

One Church, 100 uses

1. In the first 'Catch the Vision' report to Assembly in 2005, the Steering Group listed the ways in which they believed the church could move ahead. One of these was 'An agency which will allow buildings which are a burden to have the opportunity of new life', and para 10 noted:

2. 'We know that the expertise exists within the United Reformed Church to turn some of the unwanted hulks of yesteryear into possibilities of spiritual and community regeneration. Three Synods are exploring what might be possible, and reports will be made to Mission Council and Assembly in due season.'

3. The CTV Steering Group deliberately directed this process towards the Synods because it is Synods which have control of 'redundant' churches and deal with issues of re-development. We did so because we believed that would be an easier route than working through the Assembly via its various committees.

4. Our vision was clear. Our forbears in the faith have gifted us with an historic footprint across our nations. In the past, often for the best of reasons, we have sold off those buildings to developers, and failed to exploit their potential for new and innovative mission. We wanted to change that, and open up new and different patterns of work which would provide spiritual and social benefit to the community, and a beneficial income for the church. In other words, we wanted to keep faith with our inheritance.

5. As Mission Council will recall, it is Synods (or in some cases more accurately Synod Trusts) which have control over the proceeds and sale of church buildings, not the Assembly. The Steering Group thought (logically) that the way to develop an agency would be through the Synods, so the advocates of the proto-Agency, the Revds Peter Southcombe and Andrew Mawson, explored possibilities with three Synods, Mersey, Thames North and Southern. After discussion it was decided that they should proceed initially in partnership with Southern Synod, and a detailed

feasibility study has been undertaken on East Sheen URC. Detailed and imaginative proposals have also been developed for the church at Paghams. The Agency will, in effect, provide a professional project management service (including assistance on obtaining funds from third parties) to the local church concerned and to the Synod, taking over the management of the building for the duration of the 'makeover' and then handing it back, in most cases, once that has been completed, returning the day to day running of it back to the local church.

6. Southern Synod have been undertaking this role as, in effect, a pilot project for the whole church, and because two of their churches are involved, they have been providing the initial financial resourcing. They happily understand this to be part of their commitment to resource sharing across the United Reformed Church, and we need to acknowledge both their generosity and their vision.

7. In parallel with these developments, Peter and Andrew have been working with their colleague Donald Findlay (one of our elders) and with Towns Needham to create a legal framework for the Agency. The proposal is that under English law (separate provision would be needed in other jurisdictions) the Agency should be formed as a Community Interest Company (CIC) which would take over the legal ownership of the properties selected for development. Such companies can be more flexible than other legal forms and they are subject to an "asset lock" which means that the assets are retained within the company to support its activities. The CIC would be owned by those Synods of the URC which want to participate and place properties into the company for development. This would initially be Southern Synod.

8. Discussions with the Charity Commission are on-going. This is an innovative and exciting project, and the Commission are necessarily cautious. They would be helped in their deliberations by an indication from a formal body that the URC as a whole is supportive of the Agency. We are mindful that at present Southern Synod are piloting this. We very much hope other Synods will join them in the future, but we do not wish to return to Mission Council on each occasion, and we wish to act with the maximum efficiency, so we present this resolution to cover this and possible future occasions.

Resolution: Mission Council notes with gratitude the work already undertaken on the development of the Regeneration Agency, and encourages its further development as part of the mission of the United Reformed Church.



MISSION COUNCIL
5-7 October 2007

A2

Proposal for a Law and Polity Advisory Group

Assembly is changing its nature to become a council of Synods. That is a significant change, and it affects the ways in which we need to handle constitutional and legal issues. One of my reflections on this year's Assembly is that we need to improve the consultative process by which we handle such matters.

I therefore suggest that we introduce a small Law and Polity Task Group whose function will be to advise Mission Council on constitutional matters which are being taken to Assembly. Its composition would be for Mission Council to decide, but I would suggest that its membership should include the Clerk, the Legal Advisor (*ex officio*), two Synod Clerks and two or three other people who have an expertise / considerable experience in church law and polity, one of whom should act as Convenor.

I believe that this would be both supportive for the Clerk, and enable the smooth process of such business on the floor of the Assembly.

The Group would meet only when necessary, and could probably conduct much of its business by e-mail or phone.

Resolution: That Mission Council establish a Law and Polity Task Group to advise the Council on such constitutional and legal matters as the Council shall remit to it.

David Cornick.



MISSION COUNCIL
5-7 October 2007

A3

Taking forward the final 'Catch the Vision' Report

a) The think tank

This is not pressing, but it is a matter to which Mission Council and the Nominations Committee must turn their minds in the course of this year. To help the Council in its deliberations, the 'Catch the Vision' report to Assembly read as follows:

'We would also like to suggest one further way in which that focus could be enhanced, and 'Catch the Vision' taken into its next and most important phase. Spirituality and mission are not there to be 'managed'. They don't work in that kind of way. Rather, we need unagenda'd space for dreaming dreams and seeing visions. Prophets, people of prayer, and those who work at the edge are rarely comfortable with the structures and confines of institutional life. We need a kind of 'think-tank' which can see God's blue sky beyond the church's red tape. So, we offer you our dream.

We envisage a group of 15-20 people, meeting at least twice a year for 24 hours at Windermere (maybe at the end of July and the following April), to turn their minds, with the Moderator(s) of Assembly, to the on-going renewal and spiritual refreshment of the life of the church. We imagine a mix of theologians and Biblical scholars and practitioners (both lay and ordained) representing of the theological and cultural diversity of the church. There will also be ecumenical participants. It will be serviced by the Central Secretariat, and convened by the Moderator.

We believe that it should initially be selected by the Moderator, in consultation with the Nominations Committee. Members would be invited to serve for a period of three years, with a third of the members changing each year.

Any possible papers, projects or programmes suggested by the group will then be handed back to Mission Council, or the appropriate committee / department for further consideration and development. The intent is to keep a freshness of vision

at the heart of our structures, and to enable sensitive response to the shifting spiritual and theological environment in which the church finds itself.'

Assembly agreed resolution 1:

General Assembly instructs Mission Council and the Nominations Committee to do such further work as is necessary to create a 'think-tank' on mission and spirituality.

Mission Council needs to consider ways in which this work might be taken forward.

b) The Moderator of General Assembly

This is a more pressing concern. The relevant paragraphs of the 'Catch the Vision' report were:

'1.1 The Steering Group have undertaken a good deal of work on the role of the Moderator of General Assembly. We are grateful to the Revd Dr David Peel who has worked with us as a theological consultant on this. David presented us with a paper entitled *The Moderator of General Assembly: a theological reflection*. It drew on his own experience, discussion with past Moderators, and the experience of our British and European Reformed partners.

1.2 We recommend that we adopt a different model of leadership. We would elect a minister and elder respectively, each of whom will serve for two years. So, at any one time there would be two Moderators (one elder, one minister) operating collegially. Together with the immediate past Moderator and the Moderator Elect, and with the General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary, they would form a leadership group who would meet (say) three times a year.

1.3 We believe this to be commendable for several reasons. First, it makes a two year commitment to Moderatorship manageable, because the task is shared collegially. Second, it honours our theological commitment to the complementarity of the ministries of minister and elder. Third, it will provide more stability within Assembly's leadership team, which will consist of the two serving Moderators, the Moderator Elect, the immediate past Moderator and the two General Secretaries. Fourth, that group in itself will provide a point of accountability and support for the Moderators. Fifth, it would cement the relationship between Assembly and the Trustee body, not least because of the

considerable overlap of personnel.

1.4 We note that if an elder presently in employment were elected, although we could not match their salary, we might be able to provide the equivalent of a stipend as a generous honorarium for their term of office.

1.5 There will clearly need to be transitional arrangements if Assembly agrees to this proposal. 2008 will be anomalous. At the 2008 Assembly the church will need to elect an elder to work in tandem with the 08 Moderator during 09. It will also need to elect a minister and an elder to be inducted in 2010 and serve from 2010 to 2012. Should Assembly agree to these proposals, a note will be sent to Synods advising them about the details of nominations for 2008 so that the matter can receive attention

Assembly agreed resolution 5:

General Assembly resolves that as from 2008 it shall elect two Moderators at its biennial meeting, one a minister of Word and Sacraments or a Church Related Community Worker, and one an Elder, to serve together for the following two years.

And then resolution 5a

General Assembly asks Mission Council to review the whole process for the nomination and election of Moderators of General Assembly.

This matter needs resolving rapidly. Resolution 5a has prevented me from issuing any instructions to Synods about the election of Moderators. It would have been helpful to have been able to do that by the October Synod round. It is now imperative that this matter be resolved as soon as possible, so that instructions can be issued and the process put in place for the three elections that need to take place at the 2008 Assembly

David Cornick
Sept 07



MISSION COUNCIL
5-7 October 2007

B

Nominations Committee

1. Secretary for Church and Society

Resolution 1: Mission Council appoints Mr Frank Kantor as Secretary for Church and Society from 1 October 2007.

2. Secretary for Mission

The process for appointing a Secretary for Mission is currently under way. It is hoped to bring a name for appointment by Mission Council.

Resolution 2: Mission Council appoints as Secretary for Mission from 2007.

3. Appointing Group conveners

The Revd Mary Buchanan has agreed to convene the Review Group for the Moderator of the Wessex Synod.

Dr Graham Campling has agreed to convene the Review Group for the Moderator of the National Synod of Wales.

Mrs Helen Brown has agreed to convene the Review Group for the Moderator of the Southern Synod.

Suitable people have been invited to convene appointing/review groups for the following posts:

Moderator of the Eastern Synod

Moderator of the West Midlands Synod

Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry

Secretary for Ministries

Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith and Order

4. United Reformed Church Trust

The Board of the Trust has endorsed the Nominations Committee decision to put forward the name of Ms Isobel Simmons as a trustee representing FURY. This is a Mission Council appointment. Despite continuing efforts it has not so far been possible to identify a potential trustee coming from a black or minority ethnic background. Several suitable people have been approached but have been unwilling to serve. Nominations Committee would be glad to receive further suggestions for consideration.

Resolution 3: Mission Council appoints Ms Isobel Simmons to serve as a trustee forthwith and until Assembly 2010.

5. Monitoring

A further interim report based on some of the statistics currently being monitored is appended to this report.

6. Mission Committee

6.1 Proposed composition of Committee

Nominations Committee has spent a considerable amount of time over the composition of the new Mission Committee. Comments have been received from all the outgoing committees and from others involved in these changes, and have been considered in detail. Nominations Committee now recommends to Mission Council that the committee be made up initially as set out below (para 6.7). Were the committee to be constructed in such a way as to include individual specified representatives of the concerns which will now come within its general remit we calculate that its membership would total 35 or more. Nominations Committee judges that to be too large for a committee at the centre of a new way of working. The recommendation is therefore that we establish as small a committee as we reasonably can (the figures below still give a committee with a potential attendance of about 25) bearing in mind the following principles:

- ◆ it is imperative that each synod is represented;
- ◆ some of these representatives will be able to bring specialist skills to the committee;
- ◆ additional responsibility will now be vested in the staff members to manage their particular portfolio and networks under the direction of the committee and the General Secretary as the Co-ordinating Secretary for the Mission Department;
- ◆ part of the vision is to work through networks and other new patterns rather than through traditional committee structures;
- ◆ the committee should be unencumbered by expectations from the past and be allowed space to develop its own ways of working. Proposals for increasing the number of its members should only be brought after a reasonable trial period if that seems essential in the light of experience.

6.2 Other possibilities

Clearly it will be for Mission Council to decide on the composition of the Committee. The structure outlined below comes as the strong and unanimous recommendation of the Nominations Committee. However, to enable transparency and an informed discussion at Mission Council, it may be helpful to indicate which other posts, links or representation were considered before coming to this recommendation. This "secondary" list, designed to ensure continuity with existing patterns of work, comprised -

- ◆ Joint Public Issues Team
- ◆ Faith and Order Reference Group
- ◆ Inter Faith Reference Committee
- ◆ Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry
- ◆ FURY
- ◆ Church of England representative
- ◆ Methodist Church representative
- ◆ Representation from other denominations
- ◆ Ecumenical
- ◆ International Exchange Reference Group
- ◆ Life and Witness
- ◆ Commitment for Life

A good case can be made for the inclusion of each of these categories, and possibly others as well, but Nominations Committee felt that in the initial construction of the Mission Committee none of them should be included directly, so that the new committee can explore what other representation, if any, it needs in order to do its work in a new way. The one exception to this principle is the suggestion that rather than including or excluding particular denominational links, we might ask CTBI to nominate one ecumenical representative. In this regard, it would be helpful to have advice

from Mission Council about how best to ensure ecumenical involvement within our structures, and whether this might be best achieved by more representation at Mission Council itself. Without the direct links listed above, the Mission Committee will of course need to consider channels of communication between the various groups, the Mission Committee and Mission Council. The staff secretaries will have a key role in this process.

6.3 Convenership

It is critically important that the leadership of this committee and the new Mission Department is entrusted to someone who can bring considerable gifts of vision, experience and fresh challenge to our life. Nominations Committee has met with a potential candidate whom we believe fulfils these criteria and whose name will be brought to Mission Council for consideration. Given the nature of this new responsibility, the need for shared leadership, appropriate balance and a wide range of experience, it might be wise also to consider the appointment of a deputy-convener, at least for the initial stages of the committee's life. Again, a suitable candidate has been identified and the name will be brought to Mission Council.

6.4 Synod representation

Those appointed to represent synods will form the heart of this committee. Their role will be to enable two-way links to be made between the Mission Department, the synods and local churches. Some of them will also bring specialist gifts to the committee. Nominations Committee is striving to put together a balanced and creative team, and invitations to "first choice" candidates have already been sent out. However, the final list of Synod representatives may not be complete in time for Mission Council, in which case Nominations Committee will need to ask for authority to complete these appointments as soon as possible so that the Committee is in place by 1st January 2008.

6.5 Terms of service and rotation

The rotation of the membership of a new committee needs to be built in from the outset. Initially we suggest that people appointed now might be asked to serve for (effectively) 2.5, 3.5 and 4.5 years. Those appointed subsequently would then serve the normal period of four years.

6.6 Further reflections

It may be worth noting that all this is a complex process for a number of reasons. For example -

- ◆ we are seeking to reduce 111 committee places to one manageable and effective committee size;
- ◆ not only does this new committee represent a major structural change, it also represents a major change in our ways of working;
- ◆ we are trying to create new structures that will have the freedom and flexibility to evolve those new patterns of working;
- ◆ the remit of the Mission Committee has still to be defined;
- ◆ we visualize increasing our trust in and reliance on those appointed to serve as staff secretaries; they will have a key role in delivering the work of the committee;
- ◆ we are blessed with a considerable number of very gifted people within the church, many with special skills in relation to mission, and any of whom might serve this new committee well; if not appointed to serve at this stage we are confident they will be well used in other ways.

6.7 Proposed membership of Mission Committee

The following sets out the membership of the committee as proposed by Nominations Committee.

- 1 Convener

- 2 Deputy-Convener
- 3 General Secretary
- 4 Deputy General Secretary
- 5 - 7 *Ex-officio*: General Assembly Moderator, Moderator-elect and past Moderator
- 8 Ecumenical representative nominated by CTBI
- 9 – 21 *Representatives from Synods*: Thirteen people
- Staff members in attendance:*
- 22 Secretary for Mission
- 23 Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith and Order
- 24 Secretary for Church and Society
- 25 Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry
- 26 Secretary for World Church Relations
- 27 Commitment for Life Programme Co-ordinator

Resolution 4: Mission Council agrees to the composition of the Mission Committee as set out in paragraph 6.7 of the Nominations Committee report.

Resolution 5: Mission Council agrees to the appointment of convener, deputy-convener and members of the Mission Committee as set out in the supplementary report of the Nominations Committee.

Resolution 6: Mission Council authorizes Nominations Committee to complete the list of members of the Mission Committee in time for their service to begin on 1st January 2008.

7. Think tank

Further work is in hand on the creation of the think tank on mission and spirituality (GA resolution 1). In particular, some names that were considered for the Mission Committee might lend themselves very naturally for consideration as think tank candidates.

8. Faith and Order Reference Group

8.1 The composition of the new Faith and Order Reference Group needs to be agreed. (The following proposals have not been considered in detail by the Nominations Committee.)

8.2 It is envisaged that the group will have the following roles:

i) To be a network of theologians advising the Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith and Order on United Reformed Church doctrine and polity when initiatives or clarifications are called for.

ii) to provide a context where those representing the United Reformed Church nationally and internationally in matters of dialogue/faith and order can report back in person and be kept aware of what each other is doing.

iii) to be a means of ensuring that valuable work in progress undertaken by the Doctrine, Prayer and Worship Committee and/or the Advisory Group on Faith and Order should not be lost but brought to completion.

iv) to serve as one means of identifying and developing new, and especially younger, theologians.

8.3 It is suggested that the size of the group should be limited, and that it be made up as follows:

Not more than 10 people including -

Convener

Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith and Order

one representative from the Church of England

one representative from the Methodist Church
a balance of 6 members some of whom will also be involved in ecumenical
bodies and inter-church dialogues.

**Resolution 7: Mission Council agrees to the appointment of a Faith and Order
Reference Group on the basis set out in paragraph 8.3 of the Nominations Committee
report.**

MONITORING - COMPARISON OF COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP 2006 AND 2007

Slate agreed at 2006 General Assembly*

MO 89	FO 57	ML 88	FL 80
Male 177	Female 137	Lay 168	Ordained 146

Slate agreed at 2007 General Assembly*

MO 82	FO 51	ML 93	FL 77
Male 175	Female 128	Lay 170	Ordained 133

(This was prior to the changes in structure being agreed.)

The new members in 2007, i.e. those accepting invitations to serve, break down into

MO: 18; FO: 11, ML: 26, FL: 25.

Those declining invitations to serve in 2007 break down into:

MO: 2, FO: 2, ML: 8, FL: 3

*Not included:

- Mission Council, Panel for Appointment and Review of Synod Moderators, Nominations Committee
- Representatives to meetings of ecumenical and other church bodies and "conversations".

X-X-X-X-X-X-X

During the course of the year new reply forms were introduced which asked for information about age, marital status, disability, ethnicity, sexuality, etc. An opportunity was also given for respondents to state their reasons for accepting or declining the invitation.

It is hoped that in future using these forms will give a more complete picture than we have at present of those asked to serve on committees. Up to now the ethnicity of committee members has been impossible to monitor. The new forms have shown five members of ethnic minorities being approached this year of whom three accepted the invitation to serve. There may have been others who have not been identified because they did not use the new form.

During 2006-2007 only about 59% of the replies were on these new forms, so the data is not complete. We should be able to gain a better overview in future years.

A copy of the full results of all the responses has been given to the Equal Opportunities Committee. The Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry has been given contact information for those members of ethnic minorities who wished to be identified to her.



The
United
Reformed
Church

MISSION COUNCIL
5-7 October 2007

B1

Nominations Committee Supplementary Report

The following have accepted invitations to serve on the MISSION COMMITTEE

Convener	Revd Ed Cox	2012
Deputy Convener	Revd Elizabeth Caswell	2010
Northern	Mrs Chris Eddowes	2011
North Western	Revd Mike Walsh	2012
Mersey	Revd Andrew Willett	2010
Yorkshire	Mrs Anne Parker	2011
East Midlands	Revd Clare Downing	2012
West Midlands	<i>Awaiting reply</i>	2010
Eastern	Revd Peter Ball	2011
South Western	<i>Awaiting reply</i>	2012
Wessex	<i>Awaiting reply</i>	2010
Thames North	Mr David Jonathan	2011
Southern	<i>Awaiting reply</i>	2012
Wales	<i>Awaiting reply</i>	2010
Scotland	<i>Awaiting reply</i>	2011

The following have accepted invitations to convene special groups:

APPOINTING GROUP

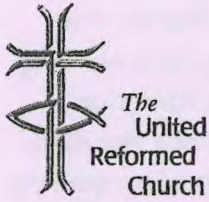
For the post of Eastern Synod Moderator

Mr Simon Rowntree

REVIEW GROUP

For the post of Secretary for Ecumenical Relations and Faith and Order:

Revd Fleur Houston



MISSION COUNCIL
5-7 October 2007

C

Church and Society Report

Climate Change

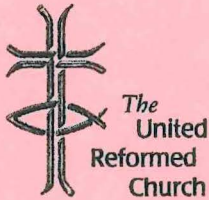
Church and Society, Commitment for Life and International Relations are exploring how the General Assembly resolution on climate change can best be carried forward. Methodist Conference passed a similar resolution, allowing the two Churches to proceed together, and a paper proposing joint action is currently before the Joint Public Issues Team management group. Essentially, it acknowledges that attempts to address all the many facets of climate change could overwhelm us, and our local churches, and that we should concentrate on achievable and measurable initiatives. We have suggested three, which have the benefit that they can be addressed by local congregations, synods/districts, and by the Churches nationally, conveying a sense that all are being asked to respond equally. These initiatives involve: energy (use of electricity, gas and oil), travel, and paper (use and disposal). Using travel as an example, a local church might be encouraged to look at car sharing, synods and districts could make greater use of telephone or video conferencing, while the Church nationally might be asked to review frequency and methods of travel. A weekly "eco-tip" is now appearing on the Commitment for Life pages of the URC website.

Nestlé

A working group has been formed to consider the URC's stance on Nestlé. General Assembly passed a resolution in 1992 encouraging churches to boycott Nestlé products because of the way in which Nestlé marketed breast milk substitutes in poorer countries, discouraging breast feeding. Although there are a range of views on whether the recommendation to boycott should be relaxed or maintained, the Church and Society committee and the Ethical Investment Advisory Group are agreed that it is not satisfactory to continue to rely on a 1992 resolution without review. The working group meets for the first time on October 10. It is convened by Melanie Frew, who is a member of the Church and Society Committee, convenor of the Commitment for Life sub-committee, and a member of the Ethical Investment Advisory Group. It will report to the Church and Society committee (or the new Mission committee).

Human embryology and early human life issues

The Joint Public Issues Team, on behalf of the United Reformed Church, the Methodist Church and the Baptist Union of Great Britain is setting up a working group to look at Human Embryology and Early Life issues, including Abortion. Members of Mission Council will probably be aware that this year sees the 40th anniversary of the Abortion Act; the anniversary is the focus for groups wanting either to relax or strengthen the law. There has been an encouraging response from people willing to serve on the working group. The final selection will be made in order to give a range of perspectives across the denominations. The working group will report to the Church and Society committee (or the new Mission Committee) and to General Assembly 2008.



MISSION COUNCIL 5-7 October 2007

D

Level of Ministerial Stipends for 2008

Background

1 The October Meeting of Mission Council sets the stipend for the coming calendar year. It hears advice both from the Ministries Committee and the Finance Committee. As the total cost of stipends is by far the largest item in the central budget of the Church, it is also proper that the URC Trustees offer a view to Mission Council as well.

2 Setting the stipend is not a science. There are no direct comparisons available as benchmarks. Although the URC stipend is higher than for several other mainstream denominations, important details about other elements of remuneration, e.g. the provision of housing and pensions, are different; this makes simple comparison hazardous.

3 In recent years, the Church has considered its ability to pay alongside the latest indices of average earnings and price inflation. As housing costs are not paid by stipendiary ministers, the index of inflation looked at most closely has been the RPIX, a measure of the movement in retail prices across Britain, excluding spending related to housing.

4 The current stipend is £20,424. The latest available figures for the annual growth in average earnings show average rises around 3.5%. The latest RPIX annual figure is 2.7%.

Proposal

5 The Maintenance of the Ministry Sub-Committee, acting on behalf of the Ministries Committee, recommends an increase in the stipend of 3.1%. With marginal upward rounding for administrative convenience, this would give a new stipend figure of £21,060.

6 The Finance Committee believes an increase of this size can be accommodated within the budget based on M&M pledges from the Synods. This figure is also within the range that the URC Trustees indicated that they would be content to support.

Resolution

Mission Council sets the stipend for 2008 at £21,060.

John G Ellis
Treasurer



MISSION COUNCIL
5-7 October 2007

D1

Church Contributions to the Ministers Pension Fund

Key Point

1 Mission Council is asked to increase the Church's contribution to the Ministers Pension Fund.

Background

2 As with other pension funds, the United Reformed Church Ministers Pension Fund is subject to periodic valuation by professional advisers. Our advisers estimate whether the assets of the Fund are sufficient to cover the best current estimate of the future obligations of the Fund to pay out pensions.

3 The valuation calculated as at 1 January 2006 showed an actuarial deficit. The 2006 General Assembly agreed, by Resolution 23, to increase the Church's rate of contribution to the Pension Fund, with part of the extra money intended to close the Fund deficit by 2017.

4 The extra money the Church would pay to the Fund was expressed as a percentage contribution per active member of the Fund (7.3% of stipend). When the calculations were done, they implicitly assumed that the number of stipendiary ministers in active service would stay constant between 2006 and 2017. In fact we expect the number of ministers to decline and so the amount of money raised by this formula will not be sufficient to cover the deficit.

Proposal

5 For the part of the Church's contribution to the Pension Fund that relates to covering the deficit, the sum paid per year until 2017 should be a sum fixed in real terms and not related to the number of active stipendiary ministers, for as long as their numbers continue to decline. In addition a retrospective payment should be made to offset the under-payment since the Assembly resolution came into force.

6 The following Resolution would have this effect if passed by Mission Council.

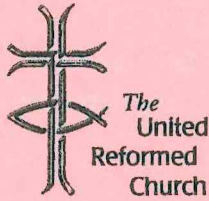
Resolution

Mission Council, acting on behalf of the General Assembly, resolves that with respect to the Church's contributions to the United Reformed Church Ministers Pension Fund:

- (i) from 1 November 2007, the active members' monthly stipend to be used in calculating the monthly payments to meet the shortfall in funding will be calculated based on the greater of a) the total active members' stipend roll in force in each particular month, and b) one twelfth of £11,895,208 indexed in line with the percentage increase in the level of a Minister's stipend between 1 January 2006 and the particular month; and**
- (ii) that an additional payment be made to the Fund to make up the difference between the shortfall funding payments made for the period from 1 January 2007 to 31 October 2007 and the payments that would have been made if the formula in (i) above had been in operation during that period.**

**John G Ellis
Treasurer**

19 September 2007



MISSION COUNCIL 5-7 October 2007

D2

2008 Budget

Key Point

1 Under the Church's streamlined budget procedures the October Mission Council must set the budget for 2008.

Briefing for New Readers

2 Each year the Finance Committee take a the lead in preparing a budget for the centralised costs of the Church. This budget covers only a small fraction of the total flow of money through the United Reformed Church as most money is raised and spent locally.

3 The central budget is dominated by the Ministry and Mission Assessments collected from every local church and the spending of this money on the training, stipends and related costs of ministers. Most of the rest of the expenditure in this budget relates to the central programmes of the Church as agreed at Assembly. There is also some housekeeping expenditure, such as maintaining the London office building.

The Story in the Numbers

4 The attached sheet gives the proposed budget numbers for 2008 but if figures are not your enthusiasm, you could capture the story they show like this:

- Estimates from Synods suggest the M&M giving will hold up in 2008
- Many of the cost savings agreed for the central programmes and committees as part of *Catch the Vision* appear in 2008
- The projected deficit for 2008 is much smaller than in recent years
- We all owe a debt to the Finance Office staff and the various budget-holders in Church House and elsewhere for their financial discipline
- There is no need to lose sleep over the 2008 financial picture.

Significant Changes from 2007

5 The structure of the budget has been recast this year to reflect the new committee structure. The figures for 2006 and 2007 have been reworked to match the new pattern as closely as possible. For example, the whole of the new

Mission Committee's expenditure is shown under the first line of Section D in the 2008 budget and covers all the areas in the first five lines of Section D in the previous columns.

6 In Section C, following the agreement that Synods would pay 75% of the salary costs of Youth and Children's Work Trainers, the cost to the central budget has fallen. There is no reduction in the work.

7 In Section F, the rise in the Communications budget reflects temporary extra costs which are not expected to recur in 2009.

8 The projected deficit is around £1/4mn. This figure is reached without adding in any estimate for income from legacies. The Finance Committee and the URC Trustees are content that this level of budget deficit can be accepted responsibly for 2008.

Resolution

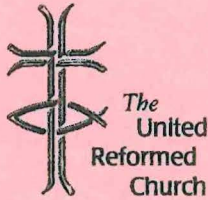
Mission Council accepts the budget for 2008 set out in the attachment to this report.

THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

BUDGET SUMMARY

Department/ Project	page	2006(Jan-Dec) Actual £	2007 Budget £	2008 Draft Budget £	
General (Unrestricted) Funds					
Income		(21,451,101)	(20,996,000)	(21,507,000)	see below
Expenditure					
A Ministry					
36 Local and special ministries and CRCWs		16,289,374	15,766,000	15,904,000	3.1% Stipend increase; 2006 inc. £770k Actuarial
11 Synod Moderators - stipends and expenses		589,910	597,400	613,000	
12 Ministries Department		235,300	269,350	278,400	
6 Pastoral & welfare		1,485	2,000	2,000	
		17,116,069	16,634,750	16,797,400	
B Education & Learning					
59 Initial training for ministry		1,201,089	1,276,500	1,087,250	Reclassification of costs
59 Continuing training for ministry		148,959	190,500	256,700	Reclassification of costs
04TLS Lay training - net costs		90,352	84,850	91,750	
04 Education & Learning Committee		144,752	142,550	139,800	
		1,585,153	1,694,400	1,575,500	
W Windermere Centre - net cost		139,756	85,000	91,400	
		1,724,909	1,779,400	1,666,900	
C Youth & Children's Work					
14 Youth and Children's Work		222,802	238,200	262,500	
14T Youth & Children's Work Trainers		254,399	225,300	133,850	
16 Pilots Development		92,255	102,300	108,860	
		569,456	565,800	505,210	
D Mission					
18 Ecumenical/International (2008 Mission department)		555,708	538,000	812,800	New department
20 Church and Society		87,298	96,300	0	
9 Racial Justice programme		98,664	99,400	0	
3 Life and Witness		89,203	45,000	0	
2 Doctrine prayer & worship		8,023	6,000	0	
01 Grants (Mission Council Grants & Loans group) Catch the Vision		69,395	120,000	110,000	
				20,000	
		908,290	904,700	942,800	
E Governance					
29 General Assembly		189,533	261,000	230,000	
01 Mission Council		60,574	48,000	50,000	
28 Professional fees		54,212	95,000	93,000	
25 Other		22,475	24,000	36,000	
		326,794	428,000	409,000	
F Administration & Resources					
10 Central Secretariat		296,343	280,500	308,000	
08 Equal Opportunities		1,392	3,000	3,000	
24 URC House costs		268,303	268,500	291,500	
13 I.T. Services		115,444	95,000	121,000	
21 Finance		373,859	389,000	403,000	
22 Communications		270,548	293,500	353,500	
		1,325,889	1,329,500	1,480,000	
Total expenditure		21,971,406	21,642,150	21,801,310	
NET (SURPLUS)/DEFICIT		520,305	646,150	294,310	

		(20,199,470)	(20,111,000)	(20,452,000)	
INCOME					
34 Ministry and Mission contributions					per Synod estimates
26/35 General fund					
Dividends		(195,988)	(195,000)	(250,000)	additional £1m capital M&M Support
Donations		(10,730)	0	0	not budgeted
Legacies		(227,374)	0	0	not budgeted
Grants - Memorial Hall Trust		(350,000)	(315,000)	(385,000)	= 2007
Net interest, less charges		(107,781)	(50,000)	(70,000)	
Other		(9,560)	(10,000)	(10,000)	
		(901,433)	(570,000)	(715,000)	
36 Maintenance of Ministries					
Dividends		(30,788)	(20,000)	(33,000)	
Donations		(13,609)	0	0	not budgeted
Legacies		(11,467)	0	0	not budgeted
		(55,864)	(20,000)	(33,000)	
59 Ministerial Training Fund					
Dividends		(6,593)	(5,000)	(7,000)	
Grants - New College Trust		(286,349)	(290,000)	(300,000)	
Donations		(1,392)	0	0	not budgeted
Legacies		0	0	0	not budgeted
		(294,334)	(295,000)	(307,000)	
TOTAL INCOME		(21,451,101)	(20,996,000)	(21,507,000)	



MISSION COUNCIL
5-7 October 2007

D3

Development of the Windermere Centre

Key Point

1 Mission Council is asked to authorize investment to help the Windermere Centre achieve the objectives set for it.

Background

2 The Windermere Centre was reviewed on behalf of Mission Council in 2002. The March 2003 Mission Council endorsed the recommendations of the review and Assembly also accepted them. By this means, the Church decided that the Centre should continue as a key denominational resource, be upgraded and receive a limited (but unspecified) annual subsidy. *Catch the Vision* has subsequently endorsed the need for the Centre.

3 Some of the intended upgrading has been completed, notably the provision of en suite facilities. The Finance Committee has however felt anxious about the denomination continuing to invest capital in a building that it leases but does not own. In addition, the Finance Committee has been concerned that the subsidy to the Centre has often exceeded budget and appears to be on a rising trend.

4 The Centre management, and the Assembly-appointed Windermere Advisory Group (WAG), believe that for its long term viability the Centre needs the capacity, certainly in conference facilities and ideally in bedspaces, to cater for larger groups (eg 40 in total, whether as one or two groups). This reinforces the recommendation of the 2002 review that improved conference facilities should be provided.

5 Much effort has been expended over a long period in exploring alterations to the Centre building to provide such improved conference space. The Finance Committee has felt unable to recommend as value for money any proposal that the local planners would accept.

6 Meanwhile Carver URC, adjacent to the Centre, has recently radically refurbished their church building to provide a highly attractive and very flexible space, easily adaptable for conference use.

7 As part of the Assembly Committee reorganisation flowing from *Catch the Vision*,

oversight of the Centre will in future (subject to Mission Council's agreement) be part of the brief of the Education and Learning Committee. Because that Committee has not to date had responsibility for the Centre it has not yet done detailed work on how the Centre would dovetail in with the training strategies flowing from Assembly decisions in 2005/6. Nonetheless the Committee believes that a development at Windermere that increased the flexibility of the Centre's use and its capacity would be very much 'with the grain' of its intention to draw Windermere into its strategy of integrated education for the whole people of God.

Explorations

8 To facilitate progress the Finance Committee, with the explicit support of various other bodies with a proper interest in the Centre, has recently taken a lead in exploring fresh options. Meetings have included visits to both the Centre and the Carver URC Elders' Meeting with representatives of the NW Synod present. The Church Meeting has since endorsed the views of their Elders. The Committee is confident there could be widespread enthusiasm amongst interested parties for the way ahead it now proposes.

9 Additional - but abortive - discussions have been held with the Christian owners of an adjacent B&B guest house about the possibility of purchasing their business to provide additional bed spaces. In the longer term there may also be possibilities regarding the privately owned house and large garden alongside the Centre. However these options are not included in the present package of proposals.

Proposals

10 In the light of all this background, the lengthy delay in implementing the remaining 2002 recommendations and the recent discussions, Mission Council is offered the following proposals. They reflect a growing view that the best way forward is to invest in the Centre by buying the freehold; but to concentrate building works on the Carver URC premises instead of the Centre.

11 Mission Council is asked to affirm its support for the objective of developing the Centre's capacity so that it can offer conference facilities to groups totalling around 40 people. The particular proposals flow from this objective.

12 Particularly in light of the proposed expansion and diversification of operations, the Finance Committee should continue discussions with WAG and others about appropriate management support for the Director, including in areas of financial control and marketing.

13 The Church should fund an atrium construction between the existing Carver URC church and halls to benefit both the local church's work and increased future use by the Centre of the church's premises. The local church and Synod already have professional plans for such a construction that have the support in principle of the planning authorities. It would provide disabled-friendly access to the church premises as well as toilet and kitchen facilities and greatly enhance the attractiveness of the premises for conference sessions.

14 The Church should negotiate a mutually acceptable overall financial settlement with Carver URC and NW Synod to include:

- (a) the purchase by the Church of Carver URC's reversionary interest in the Centre property, so that the denomination becomes the owner of the Centre;
- (b) rental arrangements for the use of the church and atrium by the Centre;
- (c) covenants to protect Carver URC and the Centre if either were to cease their activities.

15 Mission Council should leave with the Education and Learning Committee the issue of when there should be full review of the Centre, but it should be not later than 2011. The 2002 review recommended this should be in 2007 but as the work recommended in 2002 has yet to be completed that seems premature. Nevertheless, the Education and Learning Committee intends to undertake an intermediate review, to be completed by Spring 2009 at the latest, which will have as a major element the intention of integrating the committee's developing strategy and the Centre's life and work. This review will also be the trigger for the subsequent review of the Director, which will by then be overdue.

Key Risks

16 **Mission Risk:** the intended development of larger conferences does not happen and so the service to the Church does not grow as hoped. The Finance Committee believes the judgement of those appointed to lead the Centre's work should be backed, subject to a rigorous review of progress in due course. The Education and Learning Committee are fully alert to the need to monitor this risk.

17 **Capital Risks:** the main costs would be (i) purchase of the reversionary interest (c£200k); (ii) building the atrium and equipping the church for the audio visual needs of conferences (c£200k).

Re (i): if the Church intends to use the Centre long term, it is our professional advice that it is strongly in the Church's financial interest to buy out the reversionary interest. As this would become more expensive over time, this is better done sooner rather than later. The Church then owns the Centre property outright and the annual payment to Carver URC (c£7,000pa) under the lease would cease.

Re (ii): this would be an irrecoverable cost and would need to be seen as an investment in the vision; although they might offer a contribution, Carver URC cannot fund this work after spending their reserves on the church refurbishment.

18 Capacity Mismatch Risk: the expansion of conference facilities without expanding bedspaces creates a potential mismatch. The owner managers of Oldfield House, the adjacent B&B business, have confirmed they are willing to make beds available, on a similar basis to that used on a small scale now, when the Centre requires extra beds. The Oldfield House owners intend to continue their business for at least another two years.

19 Management Risk: the proposed expansion of activity may strain existing management capacity and the Centre may fail to restrict its current subsidy to acceptable levels. However, the Finance Committee views the management and budget control questions at the Centre as ones that need to be addressed whether or not this development proceeds. The Committee would wish to pursue this issue in conjunction with the Education and Learning Committee.

Recommendation

20 The Finance Committee, with the support of the Education and Learning Committee, WAG and Carver URC, recommends that the Church should work towards implementing the proposals set out in paragraphs 11-15 above, in the belief that they increase the ability of the Windermere Centre to respond to the tasks given it by Assembly and carry acceptable levels of risk.

21 The URC Trustees have discussed these proposals. They believe them to be acceptable and encouraged them to be brought to Mission Council for decision.

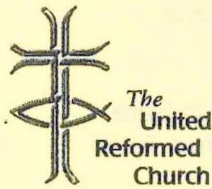
Resolution

Mission Council endorses the proposals set out in paragraphs 11-15 above and instructs the Finance Committee, in conjunction with the Education and Learning Committee, to undertake the necessary detailed negotiations on behalf of the Church.

John G Ellis

Treasurer

23 September 2007



MISSION COUNCIL

5-7 October 2007

E

Sexual Ethics Steering Group *Final Report*

The Sexual Ethics Steering Group (SESG) was formed in January 2006 and given the remit to oversee the implementation of recommendations passed by Mission Council and published in *Preserving the Integrity of the Body: Sexual Ethics within the United Reformed Church* (May 2006). This report is our final report. It will detail the work that has been done and our view about a way forward to continue to resource and oversee the work of the Church in the area of sexual ethics.

Alongside presenting pieces of work that Mission Council will be asked to approve this weekend, it is important to understand the scope and nature of sexual ethics work in the URC to see how the various pieces fit together. The work is best conceived as threefold, as noted in *Preserving the Integrity* (pp. 24-26):

1. Education, training and awareness-raising
2. Caring for victims/survivors of sexual abuse
3. Intervention and Prevention: policies and procedures to respond to allegations of sexual abuse in the church and prevention strategies

Education, training and awareness-raising

A number of the recommendations touched on the training of ordinands and ministers. The Education and Learning Committee has received their remit to respond to those recommendations and is in the process of researching the best means of responding. (The content of the training recommendations and their status are described in more detail at the end of this report.) One piece of work presented this weekend will feed into training for prevention: the **Ministerial Standards of Conduct [Paper E1]**, originally composed by the Moderators, will be offered by the Ministries Committee and SESG and discussed at our Saturday evening session.

Alongside training of ordinands and ministers, training/awareness-raising for local churches is being developed by the All Synods Safe Church group. That group is developing a **Local Safe Church Resource Pack** which will equip local churches to implement the Declaration of a Safe Church (Resolution 6, General Assembly 2005) -- a Declaration that commits churches to respond to allegations of sexual abuse by ministers and others. The All Synods group was brought together originally by the *Time for Action* working group, the members of which have since retired. Thus, SESG has stepped in to facilitate the All Synods group's work. Different Synods are also sponsoring awareness events about the spiritual and pastoral needs of sexual abuse survivors.

Caring for victims/survivors

Preserving the Integrity contains a strong recommendation that a system be developed to respond to allegations of clergy sexual misconduct. Therefore we present **The Pastoral Response Team [Paper E2]**, a proposal for a system of pastoral response to such incidents. The system will provide for the care and support of victims and their families, perpetrators and their families, and

congregations. This system will be available for Moderators and the General Secretary to call in as needed.

The Declaration of a Safe Church work being followed up by the All Synods Safe Church Group addresses issues of safe contact, pastoral care, appropriate referral and advocacy for survivors.

Intervention and prevention: policies and procedures

Intervention: SESG has worked with the *Time for Action* working party and the All Synods Safe Church Group on a **United Reformed Church Policy and Procedure in Response to Alleged Incidents of Sexual Harassment and Abuse against Adults [Paper E3]**, which is brought for your approval. A summary and flow chart are available as Paper E3'. The Policy provides a system for receiving allegations of sexual harassment or abuse in churches. The allegations may be against ministers, CRCW's, employees, volunteers or lay people. Under the Policy, each Synod (and the Assembly) will have two Advisers whose job it will be to provide information and advice to complainants and respondents and to facilitate the processing of complaints. The procedure invoked will depend on the status of the respondent: ministers and CRCW's are subject to Section O; employees are subject to employment disciplinary procedures; others are subject to Synod processes, according to the broad outline given in Appendix D of the Policy. The All Synods Safe Church Group and the SESG recommend that Mission Council approve this Policy, with a provision that the working of the Policy and Procedure be reviewed after three years for fine-tuning. The All Synods group is posed to prepare and implement training for the Advisers in the Spring of 2008, should the Policy be approved.

Prevention of clergy sexual abuse: Various Synods have held or are holding **clergy boundary training** for serving ministers this year and next. The Education and Learning Committee is researching pre- and post-ordination training. As noted above, the Ministerial Standards of Conduct [E1] is also part of a strategy for prevention of clergy sexual misconduct. If approved, it will be integrated in pre- and post-ordination training in due time.

Further work to be done

SESG has briefed the Education and Learning Committee, the Ministries Committee, the Moderators, the Section O Advisory Panel, the Pastoral Reference Welfare Committee and other groups and individuals on their responsibilities to consider particular *Preserving the Body* recommendations. Everyone has been responsive, and the recommendations are either met or in process. (See detailed report on recommendations at the end of this document.)

We are of the mind that what is needed now is an advisory group to Mission Council, which could be called the **Sexual Ethics Advisory Group**, with a remit to:

- Oversee the follow up of Committee and other work on the *Preserving the Body* recommendations that are not yet completed.
- Continue the work of the now defunct *Time for Action* working party, which includes the implementation of Resolution 6 - Declaration of a Safe Church. This work is focused on equipping churches to care for victims of sexual abuse and to respond to allegations within churches. This would include overseeing the implementation of the Policy on sexual harassment and abuse, if approved, and its review in three years. This would also include a liaison with the Resolution 40 working group, if appropriate.

- Establish the infrastructure of the Pastoral Response Team, if approved by Mission Council.
- Seek ways to assure long-term oversight of this work, possibly through periodic risk assessment procedures.
- Report annually to Mission Council.

Such a group could consist of a Moderator; one representative each from the Education and Learning Committee, the Ministries Committee, and the All Synods Safe Church Group; and other expertise as needed. Once systems and policies are in place and operational, the group may meet twice a year as needed.

We are grateful for the responsiveness and careful work undertaken by many in the last twenty-two months, notably Sheila Brain (who has worked on the Policy on sexual abuse and harassment for years); Rowena Francis, David Trafford and Sharn Waldron (who designed the Pastoral Response Team); the Moderators; and Committee members and chairs. *This report is offered with prayers for the well-being of survivors and perpetrators of sexual abuse, for the continuing strengthening of communities of care and support, and for the Church where righteousness and mercy embrace.*

Carla Grosch-Miller
 Roberta Rominger
 Ray Adams

*Preserving the Integrity of the Body:
 Sexual ethics within the United Reformed Church*

Summary of recommendations and progress

Abbreviations -

E&LC: Education and Learning Committee

MinC: Ministries Committee

Mods: Moderators Meeting

PRWC: Pastoral Reference Welfare Committee

Section O: Section O Advisory Panel

Recommendations/progress regarding sexual ethics (pp. 27-35)

2.o Preventative training issues

- A. criteria for recognising training colleges/courses @E&LC
- B. Ministerial Standards of Conduct Paper E1, with MinC
- C. compulsory EM2 training @E&LC, with some Synods providing noncompulsory training
- D. training required before movement @E&L, Mods willing to monitor
- E. Policy and Procedure on sexual harassment/abuse Paper E3, E3'
- F. training/awareness for every level Local Safe Church Pack in process, with some Synods holding awareness/training days. SEAG to follow.

2.i Care of students on placement

- A. Sending Synod responsibilities Mods agreed

- 2.ii. Procedures in the event of an incident
- A Formal procedures against ministers/CRCW's
 - 1. Mod training and reflection with Section O Advisory group *Mods doing*
 - 2. Ministerial Standards of Conduct *Paper E1*
 - 3. mandated group training *@Section O; in process this autumn*
 - 4. public Assembly Commission findings *@Section O; Mods concerned to tailor to type and severity of misconduct*
 - 5. monitoring and supervision *Mods; have clarified oversight*
 - B Formal procedures against members *Paper E3, E3'*
 - C Employment policies/standards/discipline *Mods →@Human Resources, sample terms of employment will be put on web*
 - D Pastoral procedures *Paper E2*

2.xii.A Reinstatement of ministers *@ MinC*

3. *Time for Action* working party *now defunct; All Synods Safe Church group following up Res 6/Declaration; proposed Sexual Ethics Adv. Group*

Recommendation regarding communication *publication of 'Preserving the Integrity of the Body' in May 2006; communications completed*

Recommendations/progress regarding other recommendations (Appendix B)

2.iii Terms of settlement *MinC: taken care of in new appraisal scheme*

2.iv Training for extreme trauma

- A. EM2/3 training *@E&LC; Mods provide back up*
- B. Mod pastoral support *Mods do this*
- C. Systems of mutual accountability *@ MinC*

2.v Team breakdown *Mods aware; respond case by case*

2.vi Ministry and mental illness *Assembly approved incapacity procedure in 2007, now going to the Synods*

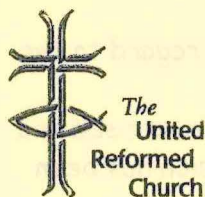
2.vii Help for those with mental illness or disorder *PRWC considered this, recognises the enormous challenge of it and believes it is best to proceed on a case by case basis as diverse situations require.*

2.viii Conciliar discipline *councils of the church work together voluntarily and by covenant; appeals process allows Assembly to address issues.*

2.ix Decision-making at Assembly level *MCAG -> @ Clerk and legal adviser*

2.x Protecting staff from abuse and violence *@Human Resources & Facilities*

2.xi Handover *@Mods in process*



The
United
Reformed
Church

MISSION COUNCIL
5-7 October 2007

E1

Ministerial Standards of Conduct

1. Introduction

This paper sets down expectations of Ministers of Word and Sacraments within the United Reformed Church. A parallel paper about the expectations of elders and local churches is to be read alongside this document.

2. Basis of Union

The foundation for the conduct of ministers is in the Basis of Union, summarised in Schedule E paragraph 2,

'Ministers must conduct themselves and exercise all aspects of their ministries in a manner which is compatible with the unity and peace of the United Reformed church and the affirmation made by ministers at ordination and induction (Schedule C) and the Statement concerning the nature, faith and order of the United Reformed Church (Schedule D) in accordance with which ministers undertake to exercise their ministry.'

The relevant promises in Schedule C are a) 'to live a holy life and to maintain the truth of the Gospel whatever trouble or persecution may arise', b) 'to fulfil the duties of your charge faithfully, to lead the church in worship, to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments, to exercise pastoral care and oversight, to take your part in the councils of the Church, and to give leadership to the Church in its mission to the world? and c) as a minister of the United Reformed Church 'to seek its well-being, purity and peace, to cherish love towards all other churches and to endeavour always to build up the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church'.

3. Standards of Professional Behaviour

3a Personal integrity and health

- To live a Christian life as a person of prayer and integrity.
- To be aware of the need to have appropriate boundaries that safeguard personal health and welfare and which promote healthy relationships with others.
- To maintain strict confidentiality of all matters shared with them in that

manner, except when required by law to do otherwise, e.g. with regard to the safety of children.

- In seeking counsel from colleagues care and sensitivity will be exercised and the identity of the person shall not be revealed unless permission has been granted.
- To recognise the need for and have concern for a healthy lifestyle, to balance availability and accessibility to ministry demands with time for family and friends, personal renewal and rest and spiritual growth.
- To attend meetings, respond to correspondence and keep appropriate records efficiently and effectively, having regard to the Data Protection Act.
- To account carefully for expenses and any funds held on behalf of others.
- Not to undertake duties whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs or when medically advised not to do so.
- Not to use privilege or power for personal advantage or gain, whether financial, emotional, sexual or material.
- Not to do anything to undermine the spiritual health of another.

3b Relationships with ministerial colleagues

- To support the ministry of other ministers and not interfere with the conduct of ministry or the direction of church life of other pastorates.
- To strive to protect colleagues from prejudicial discrimination on the basis of gender, race, age, disability or sexual orientation.
- To sever all professional ties with a previous pastorate and refer any requests or enquires of previous pastorates to the interim moderator or new minister.
- To respect the work of predecessors and successors and deal honourably with their record.
- To consider carefully the location of retirement housing and try to avoid living in the immediate area of past pastorates.
- To welcome retired colleagues as members and worshippers in the pastorate.

3c Relationship with elders, members and others

- To regard all persons with equal love and concern.
- To work collaboratively and safeguard the contribution of the whole church in decision-making processes.
- To share leadership and pastoral care with others called to these purposes.
- To seek advice from colleagues if in doubt about ones competence to deal with any issue or situation.
- To consider very carefully taking any position of responsibility in a pastorate served by another minister and to support the direction of church life initiated through the leadership of the pastorate.

- To consult with colleagues, elders and others as appropriate when considering taking on extra work.
- Not to seek to influence a pastorate in the call of a new minister.
- Not to be with a child or children or young people in a place quite separate from others.
- Not to enter a sexual relationship with anyone within a professional relationship.

3d Relationship with Councils of the church

- To be active in the councils of the Church.
- To accept the oversight of Synod and Synod Moderators.
- To submit to disciplinary procedures when initiated by the councils of the church and to inform as soon as possible the Synod Clerk and Synod Moderator when involved in legal proceedings (civil or criminal).
- To participate in accompanied self-appraisal and review as appropriate.
- To work to the agreed terms of settlement
- To follow guidelines for on-going ministerial training issued by ministries committee.

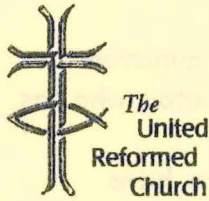
Documents used in drawing up these expectations:

Northern Synod Guidelines Expectations of and for the Ordained Minister

NCNC/UCC Guidelines for Persons with Standing

Diocese of Bath and Wells Guidelines for Good Practice in Pastoral Ministry

16.7.04



MISSION COUNCIL
5-7 October 2007

E2

The Pastoral Response Team

a proposal for a system of pastoral response to incidents of clergy sexual misconduct or abuse in the United Reformed Church

A Pastoral Response Task Group was convened at the direction of the Sexual Ethics Steering Group in order to propose a system of pastoral response when there is an allegation of clergy sexual misconduct or abuse (*Preserving the Integrity of the Body*, recommendation 2.ii.D, pp. 30-33). What follows is the Task Group's proposal of a United Reformed Church Pastoral Response Team which will provide for the pastoral care of alleged victims and their families, alleged perpetrators and their families, and the congregations impacted.

The proposed system of care does not assume the guilt or innocence of the clergyperson, but rather seeks to respond pastorally and sensitively to the needs of all the parties and close bystanders of such an allegation. The system is designed to operate completely separately from any legal or Section O proceeding, and is available to be used at the discretion of the Synod Moderator of the Synod in which the allegation is made, or by the Deputy General Secretary if the allegation concerns a Synod Moderator or other Assembly minister.¹

The Proposal

The accusation of sexual abuse committed by a minister is a very painful situation for all those involved in any way, and is likely in most cases to require long-term pastoral care and oversight. Therefore pastoral responses need to be immediate and long-term and will include sensitively but clearly facing the church concerned with the reality of the situation, and providing the necessary support for members of the church to cope with what they have discovered.

We have separated allegations of sexual misconduct against ministers into three levels or stages of seriousness, according to the nature of the allegations, the extent to which they are known, and the disciplinary procedures involved.

- a) Allegation. An allegation of inappropriate behaviour has been made, or misconduct suggested, and the minister, eldership, church or synod involved has asked for denominational help.

¹ For the rest of this paper, substitute 'Deputy General Secretary' for 'Synod Moderator' when considering an allegation against an Assembly minister or Synod Moderator. In such cases, the Deputy General Secretary will initiate and oversee the working of the pastoral response team and the financing of counselling.

- b) **Section O.** A complaint of misconduct has been made against a minister. The minister concerned has been referred to the Synod Moderator, who has invoked the Section O procedures.
- c) **Criminal Proceedings.** An alleged victim, or victims, or the police, have brought a prosecution against the minister.

At each level of response we need to relate pastorally to:

1. The alleged victim and their family (if they are known)
2. The minister against whom allegations are made, and their family
3. The congregation of the church in which the allegations have been made.

The Pastoral Response team will therefore need three people to fulfil these roles, with others in addition where particular skills are found to be required.

The Pastoral Response Team (PRT) may be sought by a Synod Moderator at his or her discretion, contacting the Assembly Co-ordinator at any point from the earliest rumours being voiced in a congregation to a referral under Section O being made by a Synod Moderator or mandated group, or a charge being brought by the police. We recommend that contact be made as soon as allegations come to light. The PRT will be trained to offer advice to the Synod Moderator about when to bring in resources and how to avoid compromising a Section O or legal proceeding. An early intervention can limit the damage that such allegations can cause to individuals and congregations and can enable a careful process for resolution and healing to be started as soon as possible.

In each case the PRT will work in close co-operation with the Synod Moderator to agree a process for supporting the complainant(s), the respondent, and the church(es) involved. The PRT will often make use of appropriately trained local people to help them fulfil the following functions, in any of the roles. The Synod Moderator will retain oversight of the work of the PRT.

1. SUPPORT FOR THE COMPLAINANT AND THEIR FAMILY

- Support for a known complainant and their family may need to be long-term.
- The Pastoral Adviser or Counsellor (PA/C) coming in to stand beside the complainant and offer support must check that they are acceptable to the complainant, or find out if there is someone else in the locality whom the complainant would rather turn to.
- The PA/C may offer to be a support person for the complainant if they wish it during the Section O process. They could also be a support in a court case.
- They will need to indicate that if long-term counselling or support is advisable this would be found from another source.
- Permission to speak to the complainant's family would be sought if necessary, so that the PA/C or others could assess the needs of the family,

and marriage counselling or family therapy among other options can be offered where appropriate.

2. SUPPORT FOR THE RESPONDENT AND THEIR FAMILY

- The PA/C coming to stand beside and support the respondent must accept what they are told, and not assume guilt, while also bearing in mind the fact that many respondents against whom accusations are proven have lied, at least at first, to protect themselves and their families.
- The PA/C will need to ascertain whether the respondent will accept his/her help, or would prefer to find support elsewhere.
- The PA/C may offer to be a support person for the respondent if they wish it during the Section O process, or during any court case, or may suggest someone else.
- The PA/C will need to bear in mind the very real risk of suicide.
- The repercussions among clergy in the area may be a factor that needs attention. The team should ensure that a suitable person speaks to area clergy from the URC and other denominations, if deemed appropriate.
- The PA/C must underline the need for the respondent to refrain from any contact with the complainant and as far as possible from any members of the church for the period of the investigation.
- The team will contact the spouse and family independently with the offer of support for them and their family, and ensure that the respondent is aware that this will happen. That support will, where appropriate, be separate from the support given to the Respondent, and may be found locally.

3. SUPPORT FOR THE ELDERS AND CHURCH

- The response offered to the church bears many of the marks of critical incident management.
- The PRT will make contact with the elders or other appropriate group within the church(es). The initial contact will involve giving information about the role of the PRT and gathering information about the situation that has led to the PRT being requested.
- A church meeting will be called at the earliest practical time to inform the church about the situation, without detail being given, in consultation with the Synod Moderator. Others with the necessary skills, appointed by the PRT, may need to be present to help deal with the reactions of individuals.
- The shock caused by such announcements means that many people do not take in what they are being told, and further meetings, plenary, and/or with smaller groups, may be required.
- Individuals who are particularly affected by the situation or have traumas in their own lives stirred up need to be identified and offered appropriate support.

- Elders and members need to know that they can contact team members at any time.
- Conflicts may well arise between those who believe the respondent and those who believe the complainant. It will be the team's job to assist the elders to address such conflict as far as possible.
- The church will need support while its minister is suspended, and facing a Section O process. While public discussion of the issues relating to the case will be inappropriate while it proceeds, individuals may need personal support, and team members will ensure that support is available.
- It is vital if a complaint has been upheld, and the minister has left the church, that a suitable minister be found to help the church with the process of healing which will have to go on for some time. The incoming minister - sometimes called 'after pastors' -- will need their own support through the period of the church's healing process, which could take a number of years.

4. RESOURCES NEEDED TO DELIVER SUCH SUPPORT

THE ASSEMBLY PASTORAL RESPONSE POOL

- Each synod will appoint two or three people to be members of the PRT assembly pool at its inception, and would appoint replacements when necessary.
- The necessary skills for membership of the PRT pool are a counselling background of some kind, with or without skills in conflict management.
- Each team must have at least one person with one of each of the following:
 - experience of working with sexual abuse,
 - understanding of group dynamics, and
 - knowledge of the working of the United Reformed Church.
- Members of the PRT assembly pool must be willing to undergo additional training, as needed (e.g. specific to clergy sexual misconduct, Section O procedures and legal cases).
- The Synod Moderator within whose synod the situation is and the PRT Assembly Co-ordinator will call together a team from a centrally held pool list, held by the Assembly Co-ordinator.
- The PRT has the power to co-opt others as necessary to fulfil its task. These will most often be people local to the situation who have the necessary skills. The PRT will liaise with a local Safe Church Synod Adviser,² who may already be involved when the team is appointed and who will be knowledgeable about area resources.

² Under the proposed URC Policy and Procedure in Response to Alleged Incidents of Sexual Harassment and Abuse Against Adults, each Synod will be required to appoint two Advisers who will receive potential complaints of sexual harassment and abuse and advise the parties of how to proceed. This policy will be presented to Mission Council in October 2007.

- The PRT is not required to keep documents, rather the Synod Moderator will deem which written records, if any, should be kept.

THE ASSEMBLY CO-ORDINATOR

- An Assembly Co-ordinator will be needed, among whose tasks will be:
 - Ensuring appropriate training is provided for PRT members.
 - Ensuring that the pool has adequate numbers of PA/Cs around the country to ensure that a PRT can be available in any Synod or area of the country.
 - Ensuring that the pool is properly maintained.
 - Keeping a database of people with appropriate skills and experience.
 - Evaluating the process of each case for future learning.
 - Debriefing teams after each case.
 - Sharing learning that has come out of cases.
 - Keeping a database of organisations which can offer specialised help.
- The Assembly Co-ordinator would undergo such training as necessary to understand the power dynamics of clergy sexual misconduct and the policies and procedures of the United Reformed Church.
- The Assembly Co-ordinator would be a voluntary post of, on average, 15 hours work a month, accountable to the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee.
- The Assembly coordinator could be based anywhere as long as they are able to communicate with Church House, which would supply some administrative support.
- The Assembly Co-ordinator needs to be a volunteer or someone who is released from other duties by a Synod to do this work. Another possibility might be to link the job with a deployed ministry.
- The Assembly Co-ordinator would be responsible for regular training days on the basic role and procedure of the PRT system. It would be necessary for this to be completed before anyone can serve on a PRT.
- The Assembly Co-ordinator will ensure that members of the Pool are aware of training opportunities organised by other agencies.
- The Assembly Co-ordinator will monitor training needs in consultation with the Pool, and ensure provision of regular training in response to those identified needs.
- The Assembly Co-ordinator will ensure training and support for 'after-pastors', clergy called to serve congregations after an incident of clergy sexual misconduct or abuse.
- The Assembly Co-ordinator will arrange for periodic review of the system, in consultation with PRT members, Synod Moderators who have used it, and the Pastoral Reference and Welfare Committee.

PUBLICITY

- This outline presupposes that all matters relating to publicity and the press will be handled by the appropriate denominational office in conjunction with the Synod Moderator concerned.

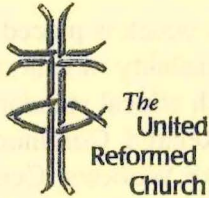
ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

- Some admin support would be needed at Church House, through the Ministries Office, particularly in relation to keeping a database.

FINANCE

- The costs of calling out a PRT would normally be borne 50:50 between the requesting synod and General Assembly, and are assumed to consist of travelling and other expenses incurred by the PRT.
- The United Reformed Church does not guarantee that it will cover all counselling costs incurred in this process. Rather, decisions about financial assistance will be made by the Synod Moderator on a case by case basis, and will include a consideration of available resources, severity of need and professional opinion. The local church may be asked to contribute, as well as the Synod or General Assembly.

Pastoral Response Task Group: Revd David Trafford (Thames North Pastoral Assistant); Dr. Sharn Waldron; Revd Rowena Francis (Moderator, Northern Synod).
Proposal amended by the Sexual Ethics Steering Group: Revd. Ray Adams (Deputy General Secretary); Revd Roberta Rominger (Moderator, Thames North Synod); Revd Carla Grosch-Miller (convener).



MISSION COUNCIL
5-7 October 2007

E3

Policy and procedure in response to alleged incidents of sexual harassment and abuse against adults

This policy and procedure relates to adults only. In cases involving children under 16, those with learning difficulties under 18 or vulnerable adults under 21 as specified in law, please refer to the URC Good Practice Guidelines.

Introduction

God created us with a capacity for touch and love, and a longing to give and receive embodied love. Our sexuality is a good gift, and can be a means of great joy and participation in God's recreating the world. However, it is also an area where we experience great vulnerability. Some of the greatest hurts come through misusing sexuality.

Church communities are gatherings of human beings, all of whom are vulnerable and fallible, and some of whom are entrusted with responsibility and power. Given their nature as communities of care, church settings provide opportunities for intimate sharing. Sometimes these opportunities have led to sexualised relationships. In many cases, this may be an occasion for rejoicing, where genuine friendship has led on to love, trust and eventually marriage. But sometimes people in leadership positions have abused the trust others put in them. In order to speak clearly about this matter, and to provide procedures for responding to allegations of sexual harassment and abuse, the United Reformed Church institutes the following policy.

The policy and procedures are based on a biblical understanding of how to respond to sin within the community of faith, as well as on the Church's developing understanding of power dynamics and sexualised conduct within faith communities. In Matthew 18:15ff, members are instructed to address issues directly and to enlist the help of trusted others. Such an approach encourages direct dealing, where it is safe and possible to do so.

It is the sincere hope and intent of the United Reformed Church to do all in its power to prevent sexual harassment and abuse, and to respond wisely and justly to allegations of such misconduct.

I. The Policy of the United Reformed Church

It is the understanding of the United Reformed Church that unwanted sexualised conduct is a violation of the dignity of the person and is a sin. Such conduct also violates the United Reformed Church's commitment, as an equal opportunity organisation, not to discriminate on the basis of gender, and to combat sexism. [The Manual, Section I b (ii)]

Moreover, sexualised conduct engaged in by ordained ministers towards people in their care is a breach of professional ethics and the vows of ordination, as well as a sin. The impact of sexualised conduct by clergy on an individual can be devastating for the person, their family and the congregation. See *Preserving the Integrity of the Body: sexual ethics within the United Reformed Church*, published by Church House (2006).

However, it is not only ordained ministers who are at risk of abusing the trust which is placed on them in respect of people in their care. This policy also recognises the responsibility of others in leadership positions in the church to ensure that their conduct does not breach ethical standards. This applies particularly to people in a ministerial role such as Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs), and to other paid employees of the Church such as Youth Workers, Centre Managers, as well as Administrative and Domestic staff. At the same time it is equally applicable to volunteer pastoral carers such as elders, pastoral visitors and Junior Church staff, as well as a whole range of other volunteers, such as those helping with youth organisations and clubs or day centres for the elderly.

We also have to acknowledge that inappropriate behaviour between any church members or adherents is a matter of concern and that everyone has a right to make a complaint if they feel they have suffered harassment or abuse from whatever source. This policy and procedure, therefore, covers complaints of sexual harassment or abuse by ministers, CRCW's, elders, church employees and volunteers, and church members or adherents.

The United Reformed Church seeks to build a working environment that reflects the Nature, Faith and Order of the United Reformed Church as expressed in the Basis of Union. (The Manual, section A) In response to this, the General Assembly aims to create an environment throughout the United Reformed Church that is free of sexual harassment and abuse. We will seek to achieve this through education and community building, through an agreed policy against sexual harassment and abuse, and through positive encouragement of reporting of incidents, which will be taken seriously and dealt with in a spirit of compassion and justice.

II. What constitutes sexual harassment and abuse

Several kinds of behaviour, if unsolicited and unwanted and especially if repetitive, can be forms of **sexual harassment**. Behaviour that sexualises a relationship includes:

innuendo or sexual talk; suggestive comments or looks; obscene gestures; teasing or telling jokes with sexual content; letters, calls or materials of a sexual or pornographic nature; stories of personal sexual exploits or experiences; looking for sympathy about their partner's sexual inadequacies; questions about the intimate details of the other's relationships; pressure for dates or activities of an intimate nature; offer to influence in return for sexual favour; inappropriate gifts such as lingerie; stalking; verbal, physical or spiritual harassment based on sexual orientation. It also includes discrimination based on gender, causing stress or humiliation to the victim, e.g. situations where dominance and abuse of power result in lack of respect for the integrity of the person.

(note: these are only examples; the list given is not exhaustive)

Sexual abuse includes sexual touching or 'accidental' touch of sexual areas of the body; tickling or playful aggression that seems uncomfortable to the person; a prolonged hug when a brief hug is customary; kissing on the lips when a kiss on the cheek would be appropriate; pressing up against the other's body when hugging; any sexual contact without consent; and unwanted sexual intercourse or other forms of rape. Actual sexual assault and rape are criminal offences which could be expected to lead to legal action, as are also some forms of persistent sexual harassment.

Sexual abuse can happen in a variety of situations, but there is particular concern when someone in a ministerial or pastoral role (the minister, CRCW, elder or lay leader/worker) engages in sexualised behaviour (see definition of sexual harassment above) with a member or friend of the congregation, an employee, a student or someone seeking pastoral care. This is because the person in the ministerial role violates professional ethics by engaging in sexualised behaviour or

contact with someone in their care.

This does not exclude the possibility of genuine loving partnerships developing between unmarried individuals in a consensual relationship.

III. Principles related to procedures for dealing with alleged incidents of sexual harassment and abuse

- a. Sexual harassment and abuse are violations of the integrity of persons and constitute sin. They are unacceptable within the United Reformed Church at all levels.
- b. All complaints of sexual harassment and abuse need to be accepted and taken seriously.
- c. The intent of these policies and procedures is to prevent violations of personal dignity resulting from sexual harassment or abuse and to attempt to heal the personal and corporate failures and weaknesses that mar the life of the church.
- d. All policies and procedures need to minimise further distress for the complainant.
- e. Principles and practices related to the presumption of innocence until proven guilty, and for safeguarding the rights and reputation of complainants, respondents and witnesses are to be upheld.
- f. Confidentiality of all parties is assured within the limits of those who need to be involved in the necessary process under this policy.
- g. The early stages in dealing with a case of harassment or abuse should include as few people as possible. It may be necessary as the case progresses to share information more widely (particularly within the congregation concerned) in order to avoid rumour and misinformation.
- h. Those dealing with a case of harassment or abuse should be familiar with the issues involved.
- i. If the allegations so warrant, formal hearing procedures should be invoked. In lesser cases, steps may be taken to try to stop the harassment or abuse in the early stages, without invoking formal procedures, if so desired by the complainant.
- j. Appropriate efforts should be made to ensure concurrent pastoral care for all those affected by the situation, including the families of those involved, whilst at the same time ensuring the security of the complainant and others. Thought should also be given to the ongoing care of the congregation and the possible need to restore relationships within the fellowship of the church.

IV. Responsibilities

The General Secretary will be ultimately responsible for overseeing the implementation of the United Reformed Church policy, under which procedures are put in place in order to ensure that:

- a. sexual harassment and abuse is discouraged and prevented within the life of the United Reformed Church
- b. every formal written complaint of sexual harassment and abuse is investigated without undue delay;

- c. disciplinary measures are established which can be implemented where appropriate (see Appendix D);
- d. advice and support is available to persons alleging sexual harassment and abuse; to those who have been accused of or found responsible for acts of sexual harassment or abuse; to the families of complainants and respondents; as well as to congregations affected by such cases;
- e. records are maintained as required;
- f. members and adherents of the URC are regularly made aware of the risk of sexual harassment and abuse and the existence of the procedures available under this policy;
- g. Advisers are appointed in every Synod and also for meetings of General Assembly, both women and men (as per appendices). The Advisers will be identified on the basis of sensitivity, experience and pastoral skills and will be provided with training (see appendix E);
- h. the procedures of this policy are periodically reviewed to ensure that they adequately meet the policy objectives.

V. Procedure for cases of sexual harassment or abuse

- a. If a person considers that she or he has been subjected to sexual harassment or abuse it may be appropriate for them ("the complainant") in the first place to bring the matter directly to the attention of the person responsible for the conduct ("the respondent"), and to request them to stop, but only if the complainant feel it is safe and possible to do so.
- b. Where the complainant does not wish to bring the matter directly to the attention of the respondent, or where such an approach is attempted without producing a satisfactory result, or where retaliation may have been suffered for having brought the complaint, the complainant is encouraged to approach their minister or elder or other person designated by the church as a contact for such matters, who will assist them to make contact with the Synod Adviser.
- c. Within 10 days of being contacted by the complainant (normally), the Adviser will advise the complainant of:
 - i. all aspects of this procedure, including the possibility of resolution through informal steps, and the right to lay a formal written complaint under this policy. The Adviser will give assurance that any formal complaint will be taken seriously and responded to appropriately either through the Section O process when the respondent is an ordained minister of the United Reformed Church or Church Related Community Worker (CRCW), or in accordance with Appendix D.
 - ii. the availability of pastoral support for themselves and their family, and the fact that such support is also being made available to the respondent.
 - iii. the right to have a friend or supporter present with her/him at any stage of the formal process (following the laying of a formal complaint) when the complainant is required or entitled to be present – and that the respondent has the same right;
 - iv. the right to withdraw from any further action in connection with the complaint at any stage, (although a confidential record will still need to be kept, and the URC may continue

- to investigate the complaint);
- v. other avenues of recourse such as those available under the Law;
 - vi. any time limits which may apply to all procedures, including other avenues of recourse;
- d. The Adviser will respect the full confidentiality of the complainant, and will not discuss the matter with any other person without the prior consent of the complainant. This does not prevent Advisers sharing non-identifiable facts with colleagues and/or peer-group supporters, for the purpose of seeking advice on best practice.
- e. The Adviser will advise the Synod Moderator of the existence of a case.
- f. There are three possible outcomes to a meeting between a complainant and an Adviser -
- i. *Where the complainant and the Adviser agree that the conduct does not constitute sexual harassment or abuse.*
If the complainant and the Adviser, after discussing the matter, agree that the conduct in question does not constitute sexual harassment or abuse as defined in this policy, the Adviser will take no further formal action and will make no record in any file. The Adviser can refer the complainant to local agencies or the court for further support.
 - ii. *Where the complainant brings evidence of sexual harassment or abuse but does not wish to lay a formal written complaint.*
It may happen that a complainant (or a third party) brings to the attention of the Adviser facts that constitute evidence of sexual harassment or abuse but, after discussion with the Adviser, the complainant decides not to lay a formal written complaint. In such cases, the Adviser should seek to identify whether undue pressure has been brought to bear on the complainant in reaching this decision. Four informal follow-up procedures may occur:
 - a the complainant may wish no further action whatsoever to be taken;
 - b the complainant may request advice and personal support as they seek to deal with the situation confidentially and directly with the respondent;
 - c the complainant may wish to request a meeting with the respondent in the presence of the Adviser, so long as the Adviser is satisfied that this will not aggravate the situation;
 - d the complainant may wish for the Adviser to speak to the respondent.

As no formal written complaint is to be laid, the only record that will be kept is a confidential written record taken by the Adviser of the complaint and of any conversation with the respondent. This written record will be retained by the Adviser in confidence until the death of the respondent, except in the case that at a later time any formal complaint for sexual harassment and abuse is pending against the respondent.

If a respondent moves Synod or denomination at any time, the previous Synod's Adviser should make contact with the receiving Synod's Adviser (or appropriate person in the receiving denomination) to pass on the confidential report of the previous informal complaint.

iii. *Where the complainant decides to lay a formal written complaint.*

Prior to the laying of a formal complaint, and only with the consent of both the complainant and the respondent, the opportunity may be given for a preliminary informal meeting between the complainant and the respondent in the presence of the Adviser, so long as the Adviser is satisfied that this will not aggravate the situation.

If the complainant, after meeting with the Adviser, decides to lay a formal written complaint (including the situation where the Adviser is of the opinion that the conduct in question does not constitute sexual harassment or abuse as defined in this policy), the Adviser will give copies of the complaint, without delay, to the respondent and to the complainant. This should be sent by special (signed for) postal delivery, and should include an addressed stamped envelope for the response. If the respondent is a Minister or a Church Related Community Worker, the Adviser should ensure that such action is in accordance with the current procedures relating to the Section O process, and that a copy is sent to the appropriate body for dealing with the matter; in other cases it should be referred to the appropriate process in accordance with appendix D.

a When the Adviser gives a copy of the complaint to the respondent, a copy of this policy shall also be enclosed. The Adviser will inform the respondent of:

- i. All aspects of this procedure and the fact that all complaints have to be taken seriously;
- ii. the right to be accompanied by a friend or supporter at all stages of the formal process when the respondent is required or entitled to be present;
- iii. the availability of pastoral support for themselves and their family;
- iv. any time limits which may apply to this or other procedures; and
- v. the consequence of not responding, which is that the procedure will continue on to a determination of whether the complaint constitutes sexual harassment or abuse.

b The respondent must acknowledge in writing within 10 days, using the stamped addressed envelope provided:

- i. receipt of a copy of the complaint;
- ii. receipt of the accompanying information, including the right to accompaniment by a friend or supporter
- iii. that the respondent will not communicate directly or indirectly with the complainant regarding the complaint except with the agreement of the Adviser.

Note: See appendix F for pro-forma response.

c After a formal written complaint has been laid in accordance with these procedures, the Adviser may, if the complainant requests it and the Adviser thinks it appropriate, (in consultation with any pastoral advisors who may be involved) meet separately with the respondent with a view to obtaining an apology or such other suitable resolution as will meet the reasonable expectations of the complainant. Alternatively, the complainant may request a personal meeting with the respondent in the presence of the Adviser.

Where the Adviser meets with the person against whom the complaint is laid, the Adviser will advise both parties that, even if the matter is resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, the appropriate person (Synod Moderator, General Secretary or other) is nonetheless obliged under this policy to review the matter and consider if the case warrants any further action.

d When a formal written complaint is filed, the appropriate person will take action in accordance with the Section O process where that applies, and will provide advice as to how the matter may be taken forward in other cases (see Appendix D).

Appendix A

PROCEDURES IN CASES OF ALLEGED SEXUAL HARASSMENT OR ABUSE AT GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND MEETINGS OF COMMITTEES OR OTHER GROUPS

A1- Any female or male member of Assembly or of an Assembly committee or working group subjected to sexual harassment or abuse is encouraged to bring a complaint through the Assembly Advisers appointed to receive such complaints. The General Secretary will be responsible for implementing the procedure outlined below.¹

A2- At least two Advisers shall be appointed by Mission Council, at least one of whom shall be a woman and one a man. Sensitivity, experience and qualifications will be considered in the selection of Advisers and they will be offered training, support and necessary expenses to fulfil this role. (See Appendix E)

Provision shall also be made for separate pastoral support to the parties involved in the complaint.

A3- The Advisers will:

- a. receive complaints;
- b. advise the complainant of the working of the procedure;
- c. advise parties of the availability of appropriate support and counselling for them and their families as required;
- d. with the consent of the complainant, advise the General Secretary of pertinent aspects of any complaint;
- e. take action in accordance with the procedures laid down in this policy.

A4- (i) With the filing of a formal written complaint against an ordained minister or CRCW, the provisions of the Section O process shall be invoked.

(ii) In cases of lay members or employees being the respondent, advice and support as to how to pursue a formal complaint will be made available to the complainant, including further investigation as set out in this policy in order to reach a satisfactory resolution, or recourse to law as appropriate to the situation. See also Appendix D.

Note: in the case of complainant and respondent coming from the same Synod, it may be appropriate to hand over the case to the relevant Synod Adviser(s). In other cases, the Assembly Advisers shall take the case forward.

¹ In the case where the respondent is the General Secretary, the responsibility shall be assumed by the Deputy General Secretary. Where there are further references to the "General Secretary", the same substitution shall take place in the case where the respondent is the General Secretary.

Appendix B

PROCEDURES IN CASES OF ALLEGED SEXUAL HARASSMENT OR ABUSE WITHIN SYNODS

B1- Any female or male member of a Synod or one of its committees or sub-groupings who is subjected to sexual harassment and abuse is encouraged to bring a complaint through the Synod Adviser(s) appointed to receive such complaints. The Synod Moderator will be responsible for implementing the procedure outlined below.²

B2- At least two Advisers shall be appointed by the Synod, at least one of whom shall be a woman and one a man. Sensitivity, experience and qualifications will be considered in the selection of Advisers. (See Appendix E) The names of the Advisers shall be published in the Synod yearbook/directory.

The Advisers will be offered training, support and necessary expenses to fulfil this role.

Consideration will also be given to appropriate ways of ensuring that separate pastoral support is available to all parties involved in the situation.

B3- The Advisers will:

- a. receive complaints;
- b. advise the complainant of the working of the procedure;
- c. ensure that both complainant and respondent are advised of appropriate support and counselling for themselves and their families
- d. with the consent of the complainant, advise the Synod Moderator of pertinent aspects of any complaint.

B4- (i) With the filing of a formal written complaint against an ordained minister or CRCW, the provisions of the Section O process shall be invoked by the Synod Moderator.

- (ii) In cases of a lay member or employee being the respondent, advice and support as to how to pursue a formal complaint will be made available to the complainant, including further investigation as set out in this policy in order to reach a satisfactory resolution or recourse to law as appropriate to the situation. See also Appendix D.

² In the case where the respondent is the Synod Moderator, the complaint should be sent to the General Secretary. Where there are further references to the "Synod Moderator", the same substitution shall take place in the case where the respondent is the Synod Moderator.

Appendix C

PROCEDURES IN CASES OF ALLEGED SEXUAL HARASSMENT OR ABUSE WITHIN LOCAL CHURCHES

C1- Any female or male member or adherent of a local church subjected to sexual harassment or abuse is encouraged to bring their complaint to their minister or elder or other person designated by the church as a contact for such matters (this may or may not be the same person as designated under the Good Practice Guidelines relating to children).³

C2- The complaint will then be referred directly to the Synod Adviser.

C3- The Adviser will:

- a. receive complaints;
- b. advise the complainant of the working of the procedure;
- c. ensure that both complainant and respondent are advised of appropriate support and counselling for themselves and their families;
- d. consider the need for long-term pastoral care for a congregation where fellowship is damaged by accusations, whether or not this leads to formal procedures, and liaise with URC pastoral response team as appropriate;
- e. with the consent of the complainant, advise the referring person of pertinent aspects of any complaint.

C4- (i) With the filing of a formal written complaint against an ordained minister or CRCW, the provisions of the Section O process shall be invoked by the Synod Moderator.

(ii) In cases of lay members or employees being the respondent, advice and support as to how to pursue a formal complaint will be made available to the complainant, including further investigation as set out in this policy in order to reach a satisfactory resolution or recourse to law as appropriate to the situation. See also Appendix D.

³ * In the case where the respondent is one of the named officers, others are available. In the case of the local minister being the respondent, the church secretary may receive the complaint in the absence of another duly appointed person.

Appendix D

PROCEDURES IN CASES OF ALLEGED SEXUAL HARASSMENT OR ABUSE INVOLVING LAY PEOPLE

D1 - Anyone exercising a leadership or pastoral role in the church has a responsibility to ensure that their conduct does not breach ethical standards. Strong boundaries need to be set in order to protect both the person seeking pastoral care and the person offering pastoral or leadership support, recognising the risks involved in any situation where one person is in a position of power in relationship to another because of their position or professional credentials. The church recognises the need for education and training for members, elders, workers and ministers on the issues surrounding the risk of adult sexual abuse in the church setting.

D2 – In the case of direct employees of the church (national/Assembly, Synod or local congregation), such as Youth Workers, Centre Managers, Administrative or Domestic Staff, etc., relevant disciplinary procedures may need to be invoked in the case of serious misconduct, whether or not recourse to law is involved. Synod Advisers should consult with the Human Resources Manager at Church House in order to clarify the situation and advise on statutory duties relating to the employer according to the circumstances of individual cases.

D3 – In the case of voluntary workers or leaders, such as Elders, Youth or Senior Club helpers, Junior Church/Sunday School staff, Leaders of Organisations, Pastoral Visitors, etc, advice should be sought as in D2 above as to whether a national body to which Leaders of Organisations are affiliated needs to be informed or consulted.

D4 – Allegations between members are generally not a disciplinary matter as there is no abuse of pastoral role. Rather, such allegations are a pastoral/congregational concern to be dealt with by the minister or Elders of the church informally. Potentially criminal behaviour should be referred to the local police.

D5 - It is essential that when an allegation is made the person in local pastoral charge (or, if that person is allegedly implicated, the church secretary or equivalent) is informed and updated as the procedures below are followed. It may be advisable for the person in local pastoral charge to ask the potential respondent, and possibly the complainant, to make a temporary withdrawal from the situation without prejudice until the matter is resolved.

The Synod Adviser should informally but impartially ascertain from the complainant and/or respondent the probable facts of the case and form an initial opinion as to whether the situation is one primarily of breakdown in pastoral relationship or apparently of abuse requiring further investigation. In the latter case, the Adviser should ensure:

- a. that both complainant and respondent are aware of the relevant Synod procedure and advised of appropriate pastoral support and counselling
- b. that discretion is exercised in respect of the situation
- c. that matters are resolved as speedily as possible, whilst ensuring that full and proper consideration is given to the case.

D6 – If a formal written complaint is laid, the Adviser shall refer this to whatever process the Synod has established for examining such complaint and deciding any further action to be taken, either through formal disciplinary procedures in the case of employees, by advising legal action if appropriate, or through sanctions against the respondent - for example:

- issuing a formal warning
- asking him or her to make a formal apology if this is acceptable to the complainant;

requiring him or her to resign from their position;
requesting him or her to move to another church under supervision
or other action appropriate to the circumstances.

The respondent shall have the right of appeal against a decision, in accordance with the processes laid down by the Synod.

D7 - It is expected that a Synod procedure will embody the following:

- An examining panel of three or five people in good standing with the Synod appointed for a specific case by the Synod Executive or equivalent or, if despatch so requires, by the Synod Officers
- All parties to the procedure to be bound by confidentiality
- The opportunity for respondent and/or complainant to appear in person with the panel
- The right, without prejudice, for the respondent and/or complainant to make written submission to the panel
- The right of the complainant and the respondent each to be accompanied by a 'friend' who is not to be considered a legal representative
- The Adviser to be present at meetings of the panel in an observer role only unless he/she judges that such presence could prejudice any follow-up role with respondent or complainant.
- The decision of the adjudicating panel to be communicated in writing to the respondent and complainant, Adviser and person in local pastoral charge. The panel not to be required to give reasons for its decision, but entitled to make recommendations in addition to making a decision. Such recommendations may include, for example, retraining and/or restorative counselling, facilitated reconciliation between the complainant and respondent, subsequent monitoring arrangements, local interview before the respondent's position is restored or resumed on a probationary basis.
- Appropriate appeal processes, of which the Adviser shall inform the respondent.

Appendix E

ADVISER JOB DESCRIPTION

Each Synod, and the Assembly, shall appoint at least two advisers to take responsibility for the furtherance of complaints made under this policy and procedure (one male, one female), to serve for a term of five years. They shall be responsible for:

- Informing local churches of general principles relating to this policy and procedure on request
- Receiving complaints (via the local church referrer or directly from the complainant)
- Advising complainants of this policy and procedure in the case of a complaint (formal or informal)
- Advising complainants and respondents of their rights under the policy and procedure
- Informing complainants and respondents of relevant opportunities for pastoral care and/or counselling, possibly in cooperation with a URC pastoral response team
- Providing complainants and respondents with copies of any formal complaint
- Collating and holding information relating to relevant support and advice agencies (both statutory and voluntary)
- Keeping and maintaining appropriate records in a safe, secure place
- Informing appropriate personnel (including receiving Synods in the case of a person's move) of relevant information relating to a complaint
- Respecting and maintaining confidentiality of all parties unless otherwise agreed with said party
- Facilitating a meeting between respondent and complainant if appropriate and agreed by both parties
- Maintaining personal impartiality during the implementation of this policy and procedure
- Participating in ongoing training, support and best practice conversations with colleagues
- Liaising with local agencies charged with responsibility to enforce laws on sexual harassment or abuse, or provide services to victims

PERSON SPECIFICATION

The following specification is only a guideline. It is expected that training and support systems will be made available to support the Advisers both within the Synod and at Assembly level.

- Experience of dealing with sensitive matters
- Discretion
- Knowledge of mediation services
- Experience of record maintenance
- Knowledge of local voluntary and statutory support agencies
- Knowledge of relevant legal issues and procedures
- Understanding of the role, and importance, of confidentiality
- The ability to remain impartial
- Contactable through a variety of means
- Able and willing to travel as required (travelling expenses paid by the Synod)
- Good listening skills
- Appropriate interpersonal skills

Appendix F

PRO-FORMA FOR RESPONSE TO RECEIPT OF LETTER FROM ADVISER

I, [*print name*], acknowledge receipt of the letter stating the nature of complaint made against me, together with information about the process.

I understand that I have the right to be accompanied by a friend or support of my choosing at any meetings convened. Such friend or support will not be considered a legal representative.

I will not, directly or indirectly, contact the person who has made this complaint, except with the prior assent of the Adviser.

I would prefer future contact to be by letter / phone [*give preferred phone number and suitable times*] / email [*give preferred email address*].

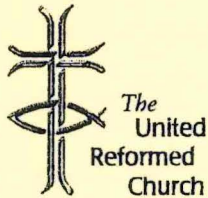
Signed

Date

Return to Synod Adviser, using the enclosed addressed, stamped envelope, with ten days of receiving written notice of the complaint.

For office use

Received on _____, 200_.



MISSION COUNCIL

5-7 October 2007

E3i

Policy and procedure in response to alleged incidents of sexual harassment and abuse against adults SUMMARY AND FLOW CHART

1) Summary of policy and procedures document

The United Reformed Church recognises that there are occasions when unwanted sexualised conduct may occur within the context of church life. When this involves the behaviour of ordained ministers or Church Related Community Workers towards people in their care, it is a breach of professional ethics and the vows of ordination. Others in leadership and pastoral positions in the church should also ensure that their own conduct does not breach ethical standards and betray the trust given to them. Whilst it is recognised that any abusive behaviour is a matter of pastoral concern, this policy concentrates on sexual abuse, an area requiring particular discretion and sensitivity because of the nature of the allegations and the need to exercise care in dealing with the people concerned. Although some forms of sexual harassment or abuse against adults may not necessarily constitute a criminal offence (as it would with children or vulnerable adults as defined by the law), nevertheless if an offence has been committed, then there is a responsibility to refer this to the appropriate legal procedures and not to attempt to cover it up.

Please refer to the full document for definitions and examples of sexual harassment and abuse.

2) Synod Advisers

Each Synod will appoint at least two Advisers, whose names will be made known via the Synod yearbook/directory. They will be available to help churches deal with any situation involving a complaint [from a member or adherent] of sexual misconduct by someone in a position of ministerial or pastoral leadership within the church, other paid employees or volunteers.

3) Principles to be recognised

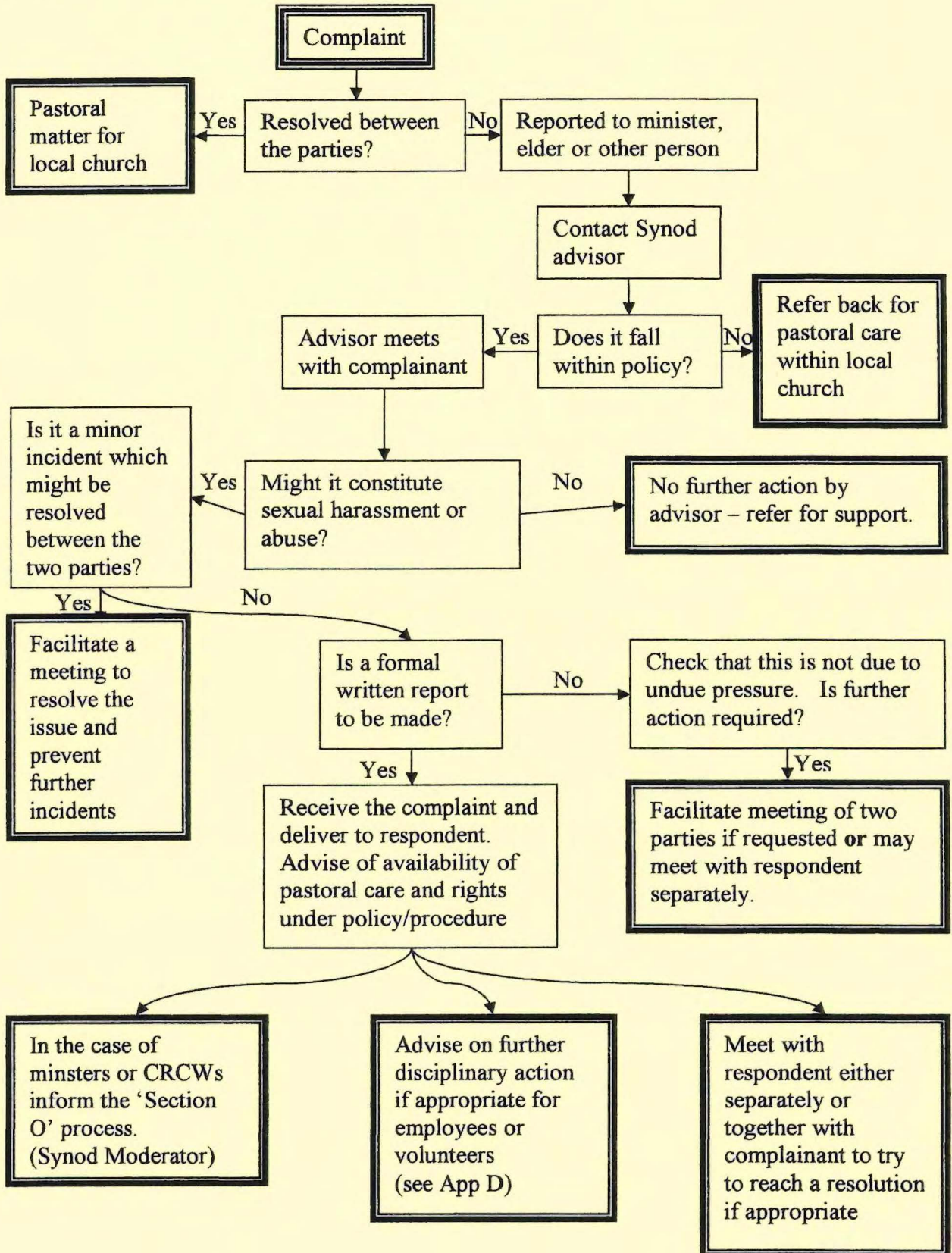
Complaints will be taken seriously, whilst upholding the practice of an assumption of innocence until proven guilty, alongside the need to safeguard the rights and reputation of victims, witnesses and the accused, as well as their confidentiality. Pastoral support will be offered separately to both the complainant and the accused ("the respondent") and their families.

4) Procedures to be followed

- a) It is assumed that any complaint will be made initially by the person concerned to their minister, elder, or to a third party who may be a person who has been specially designated by the local church as a contact for such matters.

- b) The person receiving the complaint should contact a Synod Adviser without delay in order to seek advice on the appropriate action to take.
- c) If it is considered that the complaint falls within the framework set out in the full policy and procedures document of the United Reformed Church, the Synod Adviser will take responsibility for ensuring that those procedures are implemented.
- d) If the complaint is between church members or adherents of equal standing in the church, or involves an outside person, then this is primarily a matter of pastoral concern within that congregation and the Synod Adviser will not normally intervene directly, although advice may be offered on proper procedures to follow.
- e) When the Adviser takes up a case, the complainant will be contacted and informed of all aspects of the procedure, including their right to lay a formal written complaint, which will then be dealt with through a formal process. There are three possible outcomes:
 - (i) If it is agreed with the complainant that the incident(s) did not amount to sexual harassment or abuse as defined in the policy, then no further action will be taken by the Adviser.
 - (ii) If there is evidence of sexual harassment or abuse, but the complainant does not wish to lay a formal complaint, then the Adviser will seek to identify if any undue pressure was brought to bear in relation to this decision and whether any further follow-up process is still appropriate.
 - (iii) If it is decided to make a formal written complaint, this will be passed to the respondent, together with a copy of the full URC policy document, which sets out their rights in relation to the procedure and to pastoral support.
- f) In the case of a formal complaint made against an ordained minister or a Church Related Community Worker, a copy of the complaint will also be sent to the person responsible for starting the disciplinary procedures under 'Section O' (normally the Synod Moderator).
- g) In the case of a formal complaint against a lay employee of the church, disciplinary measures may need to be invoked in the case of serious misconduct.
- h) In the case of a formal complaint against a lay volunteer worker or leader, they may be advised to make a temporary withdrawal without prejudice from the situation until the matter is resolved according to the Synod's procedure, after which it may be that some longer-term sanction may be appropriate.

Flow Chart



Outline of Report from **Resolution 40 [General Assembly 2005] Task Group**

for Mission Council, October 2007

E4

Introduction – Scenarios

Examples, based on real incidents, were gathered as we explored the background to Resolution 40. The stories cover emotional, physical abuse and neglect of adults in our congregations.

Personal support

As a matter of good practice we should stick to hypothetical and general issues as we discuss together later. If you wish to talk something specific over quietly then people are ready to do that.

Remit – reminder

Report of Mission Council Task Group on response to Resolution 40 [General Assembly 2006]

‘ to revisit the ‘ Declaration of a Safe Church ‘and bring to the next Assembly proposals to extend its provisions to cover emotional, physical and domestic abuse and neglect’

Having been invited in March 2007 to begin work, we first met in May 2007 and again in August and September. Mission Council Report to General Assembly included the setting up of the Task Group.

Group members – three ministers and three lay people.

Three things quickly emerged –

- adult wholesome relationships -part everyday life and not an additional option.
- the need to address these kinds of issues is both institutional and local.
- there are many opinions about the wording of the ‘Declaration of a Safe Church’[2005].

Background to ‘how we got here’ -

Some **Complexities** – Synods’ Group – and at least eleven other ‘interested parties’.

How we tackled this – report of work as a group – no pack! *‘Cause reflection. Change behaviour .’*

Recommendations from the group

A4X4 – called, as suggested by this council, LIFE TOGETHER –

Use of an updated ‘Declaration’ – how?

General Assembly [2005]

- a) accepts the Declaration of a Safe Church
- b) instructs all General Assembly committees to operate within it;
- c) urges synods, district councils and local churches to affirm the declaration, resolve to apply it in all aspects of their life and work; and synods to report their response to Mission Council by March 2006.

Declaration, as sent to all United Reformed Churches – Autumn 2005

E5

Declaration of a Safe Church

A Charter for Action

This church accepts that sexual harassment and abuse is a serious problem which occurs in the family of the church as well as in wider society, and recognises that sexual harassment and abuse is always unacceptable and must be stopped.

We are all made in the image of God and Christ came that we should have life in all its fullness. Therefore everyone has the right to find nourishment for their Christian pilgrimage in a safe place.

This means that:

- dignity should be respected
- abusive behaviour will not be tolerated
- there will be sufficient support for those who need it
- allegations will be taken seriously

This church is rightly the place of loving pastoral care and concern which, by its very nature, makes it possible for inappropriate behaviour to go unrecognised and unacknowledged. It is, therefore, the responsibility of everyone in this church to challenge inappropriate sexual behaviour.

This church will:

- inform itself about support agencies available locally, publicise them and learn from them
- in all areas of its life, by teaching and example, emphasise that sexual harassment and abuse is a sin. This sin must be repented of on an individual and community level before healing can begin
- take the necessary steps to investigate all allegations of sexual harassment or abuse and ensure that appropriate action is taken
- put in place a reporting mechanism to receive any allegation or complaint and take appropriate action

Every church will operate this Charter For A Safe Church.

Declaration of a Safe Church

A Charter for Action and Statement of Intent

We are all made in the image of God and Christ came that we may have life in all its fullness. It is our hope that anyone could find nourishment for their Christian pilgrimage in safety in our church.

A safe church is one in which:

- ◆ the dignity of each person is respected
- ◆ verbal, physical, emotional, sexual, racial and spiritual harassment or abuse is challenged
- ◆ allegations of abuse are taken seriously
- ◆ every effort is made to ensure that sufficient support is available to those in need

We know that harassment and abuse in all its forms happens in the family of the church just as it does in wider society. Such behaviour mars the community and causes people pain.

We endeavour to promote right relationships and to be a place of healing and growth by:

- ◆ educating ourselves about abuse in all its forms
- ◆ informing ourselves about support agencies available locally and publicising them
- ◆ in all areas of our life, by teaching and example, emphasise that harassment and abuse is wrong
- ◆ welcoming survivors of abuse into our fellowship
- ◆ helping those who are abused to get help and support
- ◆ helping those who have perpetrated abuse to get help and support
- ◆ taking the necessary steps to ensure that appropriate action is taken following all allegations of harassment or abuse

The contact telephone numbers for someone to talk to are:



UNCLE STEVE HAS THE ANSWERS!

(WITH THE HELP OF MC)

Uncle Steve,
What colour should we paint the church fence? The congregation is split between orange and blue and just can't decide.
Love from
B&Q URC, Bathtown

Venerable & distinguished sir,
I was wondering if I should still wear my black dress to General Assembly?
I keep looking in the manual (and occasionally the Bible) for an answer but can't find one. As you know the manual better than I do I thought you might be able to help me out.

What is Mission?

Harley Reel Starton



Letter Of THE WEEK



Prof O,

HELP! How can we enforce our Equal opportunities policy? What do we do with pastorates who refuse to consider e.g. female/BME candidates? Sadly it is happening in our churches and a number of cases have come to our attention – pretty unbelievable given the century we're in! Please help!

Yours despairingly!

The Equal Opps Committee

*Dear Uncle Steve,
My Elders don't like me and disagree with everything I do. I come out in a cold sweat at the mere thought of Elders' meetings and I haven't had a full night's sleep for 3 years as I'm so worried about it all. They're out to get me! What should I do?
Yours in anticipation,
Revd U N Popular, Hiding*

***Kind Sir,
What is Section O? Where do I find Sections A-N?***

***Regards
The mod-elect***

***JUST REMEMBER ... AN APPLE A DAY MAY KEEP THE DOCTOR AWAY
BUT IF YOU'VE GOT A PROBLEM ... YOU NEED AN ORCHARD!***



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Equal Opportunities Policy

Introduction

The United Reformed Church believes that all people are created in God's image and are loved by God. In his ministry Jesus showed God's love by his openness to all people, including those who were marginalised in his day.

Statement of intent

The United Reformed Church affirms its commitment to show the same openness to all people in today's world. It intends in spirit and in deed to promote equality of opportunity and diversity in all spheres of its activity and is committed to behaving as an equal opportunity organisation. It acknowledges that people are called to be diverse and lively, inclusive and flexible through the sharing of the gospel.

Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy Statement

Exclusion and discrimination can occur on many grounds including those recognised in law, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, colour, ethnic or national origin, age, marital status and disability. The United Reformed Church seeks to eradicate less favourable treatment in these areas by endeavouring to:

- Build inclusive communities where all will be treated with dignity and respect and have equality of opportunity to contribute their gifts to the common life;
- Identify and remove barriers to participation in employment, training, promotion, leadership and representation on church committees and in the attitudes and actions of every congregation;
- Take positive action to counter attitudes and practices contrary to this statement of intent ;
- Define within the law when being of a particular religion or belief is or is not a requirement for any post within the church.
- Develop detailed policies to give effect to these requirements; and
- Monitor and report on progress in fulfilling these requirements.

This policy is the overarching equality and diversity direction of the United Reformed Church and should be read in conjunction with The United Reformed Church's declaration that it is a multicultural church and its equality policies on employment, church activities, membership, committees and councils.

<p>6. West Midlands</p> <p>wef 0707</p> <p>Membership of new committees being formulated</p>	<p>Under Pastoral Committee with a candidating working group</p>	<p>Pastoral Committee comprised of the Area Ministers covering the 9 Areas – Birmingham, Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Black Country, North Staffordshire, Mid Staffordshire, Shropshire, Coventry & Warwickshire, Gloucestershire. The Pastoral Committee will be the decision making body. Each Area is welcome to have informal pastoral support groups.</p>	<p>Leadership & Mission (L&M) Committee to include Training and Youth and Children as Sub-Groups</p>	<p>Through Synod Council deciding an Annual Theme for Synod</p>	<p>Youth & Children Sub-Group of L&M Committee</p>	<p>Synod Council</p> <p>Nominations as sub group</p>	<p>Finance & Property – TWO committees.</p> <p>M&M group</p> <p>Trust Company</p>
<p>7. Eastern</p>	<p>Part of the Pastoral Committee remit</p>	<p>Pastoral Committee with advocates in the Partnerships</p>	<p>Mission Committee</p>	<p>Part of the Mission Committee remit</p>	<p>Part of the Pastoral Committee remit</p>	<p>Synod Executive acting as trustees</p>	<p>Resources Committee with M&M Advocate</p>
<p>8. South Western</p>	<p>Ministries Committee</p>	<p>5 Areas each with Synod Pastoral Advisor: Cornwall, Plymouth & N. Devon Rest of Devon Somerset Bristol Wiltshire</p>	<p>Mission Strategy Committee with sub groups and working parties as necessary</p>	<p>Mission Strategy Committee</p>	<p>Youth & Children's Work Committee</p>	<p>Synod Executive</p> <p>Nominations Committee = Synod pastoral Advisors</p>	<p>Property Committee</p> <p>Synod Trust Synod Executive M&M advisers</p>
<p>9. Wessex</p> <p>wef. 07.07</p>	<p>Development & Support Committee (DSC)</p>	<p>4 Area Synod Pastoral Committees (report to DSC) NE, NW (Oxon, W.Berks), SE (Surrey, E.Berks) (Hants), SW (Dorset)</p>	<p>Mission and Outreach committee.</p> <p>World Church as sub group</p>	<p>Church & Society group report to M&O Cttee.</p>	<p>Youth & children's work committee</p>	<p>Synod Executive.</p> <p>Nominations group as sub group</p>	<p>Finance & Property Committee,</p> <p>M&M group,</p> <p>Wessex Trust</p>
<p>10. Thames North</p>	<p>Leadership Development Group</p>	<p>6 'Area Committees':</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Central & North London 2. West London 3. Chiltern 4. St Albans 5. Lea Valley 6. Roding (District still operational) 	<p>Mission Initiatives Group</p>	<p>Mission Initiatives Group</p>	<p>Youth & children's work committee</p>	<p>Synod Executive.</p> <p>+</p> <p>Nominations Committee</p>	<p>Grants, Loans & Property Committee</p> <p>+</p> <p>Finance Committee</p>

11. Southern	Part of the Pastoral Committee remit	Pastoral committee (reports to M&S)	Mission, World Church & Mission, Ecumenical Development Sub-Committees (reports to M&S)	Church & Society sub committee (reports to M&S)	Children's & Youth Work Forum (reports to M&S)	Officers Meeting. Mission & Strategy committee (M&S) includes reps from Ecumenical Areas and Area Coordination Teams	Finance Committee Property Committee (with "experts" rather than reps from ACTs) Southern Synod Trust
12. Wales wef 03.08	Leadership Development Board	The synod elders working together and with churches in the regions North Wales possibly in 2 sub regions Mid Wales i2 sub regions East Wales in 2 sub regions South Wales in 3 sub regions Bridgend United Area West Wales Pembrokeshire United Area	The Mission and Resource board	The Mission and Resource Board	Leadership Development Board	The Synod Council and the Synod Executive officers	The Finance and Property Board
13. Scotland	Shared between Synod Pastoral Committee & Scottish College (RTP)	Synod Pastoral Committee which has four 'Link Pastoral Groups' which are the Synod Pastoral Committee meeting in diaspora.	Mission & Ecumenical Committee (Policy, Planning & strategy Committee)	Church & Society Committee	Children & Young People's Ministry sub-Committee of a Church Life Committee (for which there's no room on this matrix!)	Policy, Planning & Strategy Committee/ Nominations sub-Committee/ Synod Planning sub-Committee	Finance & Property Committee

**United Reformed Church
Mission Programme Survey**

Paper H

As part of the development of the United Reformed Church's mission priorities and mission programme we are seeking information from a random sample of 10% of URC congregations to both inform and help shape the outcome.

Please complete this questionnaire either as Church Secretary or as an exercise within the Elders Meeting and return it to: mission@urc.org.uk by the 30th September 2007.

Name of Church	
----------------	--

Survey completed by Church Secretary / Elders Meeting
(please delete as appropriate)

Please give your church's mission statement, if you have one:

Please list your church's mission priorities in order of importance:
1
2
3
4
5

	Yes	No
Have you heard of the Five Marks of Mission?		
Have you heard of <i>Catch the Vision</i> ?		
Is your church multiracial?		

How many new members did you receive last year?	
---	--

	Growing	Declining	Unchanged
Would you describe your church as growing or declining in size over the last three years?			

	Yes	No
Is your church in a local ecumenical partnership?		
If so, with whom?		
If you are not currently in a local ecumenical partnership would you be interested in entering into one to further your mission priorities?		

From the perspective of your local church what is the one most important thing you believe the URC should include in its mission programme?

--

In answer to the following questions please tick [X] up to 5 items which you believe it is important for the URC to be doing:

Do you believe that it is important for the URC	
• To help people worship God?	
• To help people develop their faith journey?	
• To encourage reading of the Bible?	
• To help people develop a personal prayer life?	
• To welcome and support minority ethnic Christians within the church?	
• To be engaged with current social, economic and political issues?	
• To support and encourage evangelism?	
• To foster interfaith dialogue and work with other faith communities?	
• To work for social cohesion?	
• To support and encourage learning from the world church?	
• To promote environmentally friendly living?	
• To promote justice and peace in the world?	
• To support our overseas partners?	
• To promote ecumenism?	
• To provide support for refugees and asylum seekers?	
• To help people develop their own spirituality?	
• To develop worship resources?	
• To foster dialogue with other churches?	
• To encourage the development of alternative forms of Christian community (e.g. house churches, cell groups, etc.)?	
• To abandon all central and synod programmes and leave the work of mission entirely up to local churches?	

Thank you for your time in completing this questionnaire.

If there is anything else you would like to add please include it in the space below.

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MISSION COUNCIL 5-7 October 2007

J

Doctrine Prayer and Worship Committee

OUR LIFE TOGETHER: THE BASIS OF OUR UNION

Introduction

After many years of prayerful consideration and careful negotiation, the United Reformed Church (URC) came into being on 5 October 1972 when its inaugural, uniting assembly was held at the Central Hall, Westminster, followed by an ecumenical celebration in Westminster Abbey.¹ Originally the union of the Congregational Church (formerly Union) of England and Wales² and the Presbyterian Church of England, subsequent union has occurred with the Re-formed Association of Churches of Christ in 1981 and with the Congregational Union of Scotland in 2000. At the time of writing (2007), the URC remains the only product of cross-denominational union in Britain,³ though each of the 'denominations' which formed it and shaped its life belonged to a particular theological and ecclesiastical tradition. Though brief, this historical description highlights two significant aspects of the URC's ecclesiology (what we believe to be true about the Church). First, the URC is committed to ecumenism and specifically to the manifestation in history of the essential unity of the Church. Second, the URC has emerged from those denominations which hail primarily from the sixteenth century Reformation, specifically those in the Calvinistic and Dissenting traditions.⁴

Faith and Order in the URC are understood according to the Basis of Union.⁵ Although it is not a statement of systematic theology, the Basis of Union nevertheless outlines what the URC believes the Church to be. Inevitably, then, the Basis of Union reflects theological convictions (what we hold to be true about God) because the Church's central concern is how God relates to human beings and how human beings relate to each other as a result of their relationship with God. Consequently, the belief in the Trinitarian God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit (§A12, 17) who has redeemed humankind, who has reconciled the world to himself and who calls the Church into being and empowers it for continued witness in the world (§A1) is essential to all other claims in the Basis of Union. Based on an understanding of God's nature revealed through his historical acts, the Basis of Union expresses what the URC means when it claims to be a Church both *Catholic* and *Reformed*.

1. Ecclesiology

Catholicity

Both the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed (accepted with thanksgiving in the Basis of Union §A18) affirm that there is One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. This Church is not the product of human activity. Instead, it is *creatura verbi divini* (the creature of the divine Word), existing as a direct result of God's call, spoken in (and not merely by) Jesus Christ and made effective by the Holy Spirit. In other words, the Church is not primarily a sociological entity but a theological one, called into being, given its mission and ultimately sustained by the Trinitarian God. Because

God's prevenient (prior) and gracious (electing) activity gives rise to the Church's existence, its unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity are not defined in terms of human morality, belief and activity. As a result, these 'marks' refer people not to speculative propositions about God, but to the record of his action in history.

- The Church's holiness is bestowed on it by God who has reconciled the world to himself through the incarnation, death and resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:19), and is present among his people by the Holy Spirit. In other words, the Church is consecrated (called and set apart) by God's historical action and his ongoing presence. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ is holy, i.e. he wills that justice and righteousness prevail and that sin is overcome and destroyed. The Church's holiness derives from God's holy nature and action. It is sanctified and consecrated by his presence and because of its resulting witness and commitment to the God who is holy. In this way it is the biblical promise of the presence of Christ (Mth. 18: 20; 28:20) as Lord and Saviour, and not the morality of its members, that accounts for the holiness of the Church (§A2). The living of life as Christ's disciples certainly entails moral decision-making, but this in itself can never account for the Church's holiness. Instead, the Church's holiness is a corollary of God's – the God who brings it into being in the first place.
- During the fifth century, Vincent of Lérins defined catholicity as 'that which is believed everywhere, at all times by all people'. Such a definition emphasizes the unchanging nature of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Heb. 13:8) and the need for Christians of all ages to follow him as Lord. However, the Dissenting wing of the Reformed tradition, particularly as it developed in England and Wales, has tended to emphasize the call of Christ rather than common credal confession as the source of unity. This is because incorporation into the Church is predicated on being incorporated into Christ. The Church is catholic, then, because all are bound together as one in Christ (Acts 4:32; Eph. 4:4).⁶ This proclaims the theological truth that all who are in Christ constitute an eternal fellowship unconstrained by time and space. Catholicity means that the Church in any particular place and time is continuous with the Church in all places and at all times. This continuity finds its source in the invisible church, the communion of all the saints, which is prior to any historical and contextual manifestation of it. Nevertheless, the invisible must become visible. In the Reformed tradition, the one Church is made manifest in history through the sharing of a common faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, the worship of the Trinitarian God and the continuation of Christ's mission in the world. As a result, the Church's catholicity is also revealed in its mission in which it discloses that it *exists for* all people in all times. Catholicity requires that the Church reach out in love to all people because it derives from God's love revealed in Christ which is not restricted to an elect or an élite, but is to be proclaimed and shown to all (Jn. 3:16; §A3).
- Neither the presence of the so-called apostolic gifts nor the evangelistic activity of its members define the Church's apostolicity. Furthermore, it is not defined, as in other communions, according to an unbroken, episcopal line stretching back to the apostles themselves. Instead, apostolicity is located in the fact that God continues graciously to entrust to the Church the task of

proclaiming to the world the same gospel as that committed to the first apostles. The Church is apostolic as it fulfils its mission to increase on earth among human beings the love of God and of neighbour.⁷ Like catholicity, apostolicity is also a matter of continuity between Christ's historical mission in first century Palestine and his continuing ministry throughout history and in the contemporary Church. As the Church is engaged in this mission and makes it visible in time and space, so it shares in the apostolic witness and calling. Within the Reformed tradition, it is the responsibility of the Councils of the Church, and not specific individuals, to maintain its apostolic calling (§A4).

There is, then, only one Church of Jesus Christ which is revealed in each age and in each place. This has two important implications.

- First, the universal, catholic Church is made visible through the historical, the contextual and the local (§A16). However, this means that we do not know the Church in its fullness; we know it only through its partial revelation (as 'in a mirror dimly', 1 Cor. 13:12, NRSV). Consequently, there is no single way to be catholic. Because the means of structuring or institutionalising catholicity depend on historical and contextual factors, they can be changed as theological understanding grows and develops in each age. As a result, the Basis of Union affirms that the form and structure of the Church is not a theological datum, but that it is an expression of obedient discipleship which must be open to the prompting of the Spirit and thus to the possibility of change (§A9). In other words, structure, or order, can be said to be essential to the visible church, but there is no particular form that this structure must take.
- Secondly, catholicity reminds us that there is always that beyond a single congregation, and even a particular denomination, which belongs to Christ. Consequently, other denominations are recognized to be manifestations of the one Church, because all who are by grace united to Christ are necessarily related to one another (Jn. 15:1-8). For the URC, this is given concrete expression in the commitment to 'take wherever possible and with all speed, further steps towards the unity of all God's people' (§A8). For the Reformed, the holiness, catholicity and apostolicity of the Church, established through the call and presence of Christ, require the quest for unity (or oneness) in the present even though it will finally be received in fullness only in the future (when God is 'all in all' – 1 Cor. 15:28). Those who drafted the Basis of Union stated that 'We hope that our attempt to provide an open-ended church order will make evident our keen desire to become one with other Christian communions.' Given the empirical fragmentation of the Church, ecumenism is the natural consequence of catholicity (§A8, 9).

Reformed

Both the sixteenth-century Reformers and their spiritual offspring claimed that they had not ceased to be Catholic, merely that they had broken away from the practices of the medieval church which they perceived to be corrupt. In essence, to be both Catholic and Reformed requires both continuity with the apostolic church and a rejection of non-biblical practices.

The word 'Reformed' has no historical currency in English and Welsh ecclesiology, a fact which has, at times, led to some confusion over its meaning. Yet the Reformed have, perhaps, spilled more ink than most over the question of identity. Most definitions seem to hold in common one or more of the following: the sovereignty of God, the authority of scripture (*sola scriptura*), salvation by grace through faith (*sola gratia, sola fide*), the need for order in a church which is constantly discerning God's will and responding to it (*ecclesia reformata semper reformanda est*) and the call to do all things to the glory of God alone (*soli Dei Gloria*). The debate about the Reformed tradition re-emerged in English Nonconformity during the mid twentieth century. Within Presbyterianism this renaissance was associated with the names of two of its most profound thinkers, Carnegie Simpson and Charles Anderson Scott. In Congregationalism it could be traced back to the work of P. T. Forsyth, though it owed much to the later contribution of Nathaniel Micklem, J. S. Whale, John Marsh and Daniel T. Jenkins.⁸ Within both communions, the result was a renewed emphasis on order in church life and worship, and a high view of the office of ordained ministry.

While not all the classic characteristics of the Reformed tradition are mentioned in the Basis of Union, they lie implicitly behind the explicit references to (1) the presence of the Word of God in both the Old and New Testaments (*sola scriptura*) and (2) the dynamic nature of this Word which is to be discovered in each age and inspires constant reformation of the church.

The Scriptures

While the scriptures are acknowledged to be the primary authority in all matters of faith and conduct (§A12), they do not constitute a closed book but vital, working documents which paradoxically *contain* the Word of God but do not *constrain* it. The recognition of the authority of scripture and of the dynamic nature of God's Word are essential components of Reformed and Dissenting thought. According to John Robinson, in his farewell speech to the Pilgrim Fathers in 1620, 'the Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from his holy word'. According to John Calvin, the scriptures had to be interpreted, and their authority recognized, by the witness of the Holy Spirit (*testimonium Spiritus Sancti*) which is external in the scriptures but must become internal in the hearts of believers in order to confirm to them the truth of the gospel.⁹ According to Karl Barth, the Word of God is primarily the reconciling Incarnate Word (*logos ensarkos*) or Jesus Christ, who is witnessed to in the scriptures and is present when the Word is proclaimed. We could refer, then, to a 'biblical' or 'biblicist' element to Reformed ecclesiology which confirms the authority of scripture, but we must also recognize a 'pentecostal' or 'charismatic' element which enables the Spirit to speak or to lead the Church in its mission as new light is poured on the scriptures (§A6, 12).

Discerning the will of God arises from knowledge of the scriptures *and* the guidance of the Spirit. While biblical interpretation and the proclamation of the gospel are both properly the task of individuals, and often of ordained individuals, the Reformed tradition tends not to conceive the discernment of God's will as the task of individuals alone. Instead, this is the task of the whole Church meeting in council (see below). Reformed ecclesiology fundamentally affirms the place of each one in the whole Body of Christ. When the saints gather together, then the 'priesthood of all believers' can be perceived.

Constant Reformation

The belief that the life of faith in each age has yet more to discover of the truth of God and his purpose for the whole creation leads to the conclusion that a 'Reformed Church is always being reformed' (*ecclesia reformata semper reformanda est*). Consequently, the visible form which it currently takes can never be the only one in which the Church can be made manifest. Rather the Church is forever able to be renewed and to change its form when, under the Word of God, the Spirit prompts it to do so.¹⁰ Thus a church which is both *Catholic* and *Reformed* recognizes its essential continuity with Christ's people in all places and at all times alongside its divine calling to seek continual renewal and rejuvenation in fulfilling its mission in each age. Such a church is characterized by a zeal for continuity and a willingness to accept change. This applies even to the Basis of Union which is more a working document than a fixed one; it can be 'altered', 'added to', 'modified' and even 'superseded' in order to facilitate the Church's mission – providing that any amendment conforms with the mind of Christ, and that it does not contradict the catholicity of the church or the Reformed principles on which it is built (§A9).

A Dissenting Voice

While influenced by many social and political factors, both Presbyterianism and Congregationalism emerged initially because of the belief held by some that reform in the English church had not gone far enough. This was the view of the Separatist harbingers of Congregationalism and of such sixteenth century Presbyterians as Thomas Cartwright. From the early days of the English Reformation to the end of the Commonwealth in 1660 the distinct possibility remained that either the Established Church would adopt a Presbyterian polity (rather than an Episcopalian one) or that a comprehensive settlement would be achieved incorporating all forms of ecclesiastical practice. However, the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 heralded a period of exclusion and persecution for those who refused to conform to the requirements laid down by monarch and parliament or to the *Book of Common Prayer*. Dissenting traditions developed into organised communions which denied to the state the right to interfere in matters spiritual. It was not external force but churchly conviction which was to govern in matters of faith. This had two important ramifications in the development of Nonconformist thought. One was the importance given to individual conscience; the other was the advocacy of the separation of ecclesiastical authority from that of the state (§Schedule D).

It is hardly surprising that a tradition that was marginalized and excluded as well as persecuted for its nonconformity should develop respect for personal conscience. Yet history alone does not account for this; it also has theological resonance with the fact that each person voluntarily confesses faith when he or she joins the body of Christ at baptism or confirmation. The Church, as understood in the Basis of Union, is formed by the Spirit to be a free community in which personal conviction is respected. But because the Church is more than merely the sum of its constituent parts (i.e. it is more than simply a group of individuals who agree to gather together so long as they are in agreement with each other), the Basis of Union also allows for the restriction of personal freedom when it is deemed to threaten the unity and peace of the whole body (§A10).

Summary

Although not included in the final document, the following definitions were agreed upon by the drafting committee.

Catholicity – ‘sharing the faith and worship of the Universal Church and responding with it to God’s call to offer the Gospel for the life and well-being of mankind [*sic*].’

Reformed – ‘recognizing the Word of God in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be both the creative stimulus to Christian living and service and the continuing criterion for judging the forms and traditions of the Church’s life.’

These definitions reflect the URC’s understanding of what constitutes the Church and demonstrate that its essence is inextricably linked to its mission in and to the world. But because God is actively engaged in the Church on earth in revealing his will anew in each age, the URC recognizes that the Church is only ever the Church *in via*. Thus its order and its mission are never eternally fixed. Furthermore, it recognizes that even among its members there will be differences in understanding and conviction. The task which faces the URC, then, is to enable flexibility in its structures and its forms in order to equip its members to live not merely in agreement with certain beliefs and practices but to remain together even in the midst of disagreement over their implications and implementation. Without this commitment to be together (known in early Dissent through the notion of Covenant) it becomes impossible for the Church to fulfil its mission.

2. Faith and Order

Faith

According to the Basis of Union, God’s will is revealed in history, in the proclamation of the gospel, and when the ‘saints’ gather in council. This is a matter primarily of the Church’s faith, namely the apostolic faith as held by the gathered community of those who profess faith in Christ as Lord and Saviour and seek to follow him in the world. But alongside this, God’s will is inextricably bound up with the Church’s order whose purpose it is to enable the revelation of God and his will to take place continually.

Those who formulated the Basis of Union wrote under the conviction that it was in faith and order that the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church was made visible in the world. The two central affirmations of faith are that, first, God, as he has been revealed in the history of Israel and supremely in Jesus Christ, is Trinity and, second, that we know this God by means of the Word of God and the testimony of the Holy Spirit (§A12, 13). Revelation enables God to be ‘known’ (Jn. 1:18). This revelation has been recorded in the scriptures and becomes real in the present when the Word is proclaimed, through the power of the Holy Spirit. As Calvin confirmed, it is in preaching the gospel that ‘Christ is depicted before our eyes as crucified’.¹¹ In this way, preaching has a *sacramental* nature, even if it is not a *sacrament*.¹²

Sacraments

The URC observes the two ‘gospel sacraments’ (i.e. the sacraments which can be found in the New Testament) of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, in which ordinary materials become the means by which the extraordinary grace of God is made known (§A14, 15).¹³ On the whole, the Reformed have rejected the notion that the sacraments are *signa nuda* (bare signs) and adopted the belief that they are real means

of grace through which the Spirit nurtures believers. Consequently, both sacraments declare in action and through created properties the grace of God, his reconciliation of the world to himself and the forgiveness of sins which God accomplishes for all people and for all time in Jesus Christ. In this way the sacraments transcend the time and place in which they are celebrated and draw the local church into communion with the catholic Church, visible and invisible.

Baptism

Baptism is the sacrament of entry into the Church and the Christian life. It is, as Jürgen Moltmann declares, the 'door to grace' which a person receives only once. It can be celebrated in infancy in which case promises are made to raise the child in the Christian faith and within the covenant family of the Church, encouraging him or her to make a personal confession and enter into Church membership. It can also be celebrated in adulthood, following personal confession of faith, providing the person concerned has not previously been baptized. As a means of grace, baptism's effectiveness is not grounded in any of the promises made. Instead, baptism, whether of a child or of an adult, is a sign of God's grace towards us in our helplessness (Roms. 5:6; §Schedule A). This does not mean that confession of faith is unimportant. Rather, it reminds us that we only ever respond to God's prevenient, gracious action towards us. Nevertheless, the URC recognizes that the form of baptism may be a matter of personal conviction. As such, it affirms that neither 'the person administering baptism' nor 'the person seeking it', nor 'the parent(s) requesting it for an infant' shall be forced to act against conscience (§A14).

The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper, Moltmann tells us, is 'the path of grace'. As such it is continually celebrated throughout the Christian life,¹⁴ though it is the local church which decides on how frequently it should be celebrated. It has a contentious history, and there was little agreement even among the Reformers over what occurs during the meal. Luther rejected transubstantiation (that the bread and wine physically become the body and blood of Christ) but, through an appeal to scripture (e.g. Mth. 26:26), he claimed that Christ was physically present in the elements. If Christ could not be believed to be literally there, as the scriptures suggested, then the scriptures were not trustworthy at all. For Zwingli, the material and the spiritual were to be kept separate. Thus no material entity could affect the soul. When we share in the meal we rise above the physical in order to contemplate the spiritual and it is there that God's grace becomes effective through recalling (*anamnesis*) Christ and his sacrifice. Calvin accepted that Zwingli was right to reject the physical presence of Christ in the meal, but if there was no presence, then there was no real communion. Consequently he believed that, by the gracious and mysterious action of the Holy Spirit, those who partake in the meal do in fact receive of the body and blood of Christ even though the elements themselves do not transform into other substances. The Basis of Union affirms this Calvinistic stance, that Christ is present in the celebration of the meal, without attempting to explain how this may come to be (except to confirm that it is the consequence of God's grace).

Although not explicitly cited in the Basis of Union, it is worth mentioning that the Reformed tradition, especially in its Dissenting form, tends to place less significance on understanding the sacrament, on the words spoken by the president or on the

person of the president (as other traditions do), than on the faith of the gathered community. It is as God's people, the saints, gather to celebrate the Lord's Supper that the presence of Christ finds its locus and guarantor. This is, of course, equally true of all gatherings of the saints regardless of the celebration of the sacraments, and it is this that ultimately validates the councils of the church as the context in which God's will is discerned.

Availability of the Sacraments

As the means of grace, baptism should be available to all who are committed to Christian discipleship whether through personal confession of faith or because they will be nurtured in the faith as children of the covenant. As a sacrament of the Church catholic, the Lord's Supper should be available to all in good standing with the Christian Church in any of its branches. While historically the Lord's Supper was celebrated within the founding denominations only by those who were members of the local church, in more recent years the practice of an open table has become common throughout the URC. This may be the result of theological reflection as well as pragmatic concern. On the one hand, there has been a growing sense that the sacrament is a gift of the grace of God and thus access to it cannot be restricted by the Church. On the other hand, the mechanics of refusal within the context of divine worship would appear difficult to implement to say the least.

The Basis of Union itself offers little advice concerning the openness of table or otherwise at the Lord's Supper. It tells us that it is the celebration of the Lord's people (§A15), and while it could be that this refers to 'members', this is not explicitly stated. It is for the local church, through its Elders' and Church Meeting to decide on frequency and openness of table. It may be that one of the corollaries of an open table in current church life has been a tendency to undermine the significance given to the process of Christian initiation through baptism and confirmation into church membership and full participation in the Church Meeting. It is possible that the open table (a notion that tends to place the onus of discipline on members of the congregation rather than on the church's ministers and officers) may now have precedence over some other fundamental aspects of the URC's ecclesiology.

The Basis of Union affirms that an ordained minister would normally preside at the sacraments not because ordination imbues the person concerned with special gifts or status to enable her or him to perform the rite, but because of the need for order in the Church. This order is primarily maintained through the way in which the councils of the church authorise and oversee those who have been set apart and recognized to serve throughout the denomination, namely – in this context – Ministers of Word and Sacrament. The need for *orderliness* gives rise to an *order* of ministry where the church recognizes the vocation of certain people to undertake a proclaiming and presiding ministry. This is their role in the Church, and the church would expect them, in the first instance, to be responsible for performing it.

However, as Calvin pointed out, God does not require ministers, but we do. God graciously calls people into ministry in order to open to us the channels of grace in the Gospel through its proclamation in Word and Sacraments and to instruct us in the mysteries of the divine will. Consequently, church *order* is linked to the *order of salvation* made known in Christ. Nevertheless, the Minister is not singled out as a

special individual enabled to preside as a result of her or his particular status – there is no ‘indelible character’ conveyed as a result of ordination. Rather ordination, too, constitutes the recognition that the Church’s worship, that which makes its presence visible as Church, is subject to proper order and conveys to us God’s order of salvation.

This does not mean that those who are not ordained may never preside at the Sacraments, but that their presidency must be confirmed by the Church because it is through order and not by chaos that the church’s well-being is secured. It is the need to ensure order alongside the imperative to ensure that the sacraments are available to all local churches that has given rise to the authorization, by the Councils of the church, of those other than ordained ministers to preside under exceptional circumstances. Initially, this task belonged to the District Councils (Area Councils in Scotland) which were able to authorise certain members of the URC to preside ‘where pastoral necessity so requires’ (§A25). This claim was interpreted in different ways, though testimony suggests that most District Councils would annually approve a list of names offered from the eldership of the local churches to preside within that congregation if that congregation were denied the sacraments for want of an ordained minister. It is not clear that this was the intention of the drafting committee, especially as the Basis of Union stated that the District Council’s oversight of the local church requires a regular review of the pastoral need rather than a list of names.¹⁵ Following the decision of General Assembly in 2006 to disband the District Councils, leaving one level of Council (the Synod) between the local church and the General Assembly (see below), it has not yet become clear how the Councils of the church will exercise this oversight in future. The need to exercise oversight for order’s sake will mean that the Synods will have to make such provision. It remains to be seen whether a common policy throughout the denomination would ensure order or whether due process with greater flexibility at local level will suffice.

Creeds

As an active and dynamic entity, rather than a simple matter of belief or a checklist of doctrinal points, faith responds to the changing conditions found in the world. Consequently, all confessions of faith are considered to be historical documents belonging to particular thought patterns and expressing the gospel in the philosophical preconceptions of their own day. The statement of faith included in the Basis of Union (§A17) is deemed to be a confession ‘at the date of formation’. The Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed are affirmed as having proclaimed the apostolic faith in their time, as are the historic formulations of the founding denominations.¹⁶ The Basis of Union recognizes the right of the church to formulate new expressions of faith as and when they are required. Since 1972, this has occurred only once when the General Assembly agreed, in 1997, to include, in the Basis of Union, a statement of faith written in gender-inclusive language (§A18). However, it is important to recognize that this new statement was intended not to replace the previous statement but to stand alongside it as an attempt in a particular time and place to give expression to the main tenets of the Christian faith.

It is difficult to assess the status of the creeds within the practice of the URC. It seems that neither confession of faith (§A17 and A18) is used with any regularity while some congregations do confess faith during worship according to the traditional creeds. More common use is made of one or other version of the ‘statement

concerning the nature, faith and order of the United Reformed Church' (§Schedule D), though its doctrinal content is restricted to belief, with the whole Church, in the Trinitarian God. The statement goes on to affirm the renewal of the Christian life by the Holy Spirit through the Sacraments, the authority of scripture as discerned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the status of credal statements, the importance of the Basis of Union, a commitment to change when necessary (*semper Reformanda*), the rights and limits associated with personal conscience, the distinction between the government of the Church and that of the state, and the intention to pursue visible unity. The emphasis in this 'statement' is placed far more on what the church *does* than on what it *believes*. This has arisen partly because there are those in the church who believe that action should take precedence over thought and belief, but partly for of historical and theological reasons.

In the Dissenting tradition of England and Wales, faith was conceived of primarily as a matter of the heart, of the conscience and of the will. It emerged from God graciously dealing directly with the human soul, with the scriptures as the sole authority for discerning and understanding God's will under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. As a result, creeds tended to be eschewed as secondary and even sectarian devices imposed by intermediaries who had no right to exist between the saints and God. What is clear is that the Basis of Union affirms (1) that Christian faith can be expressed in credal formulations; (2) that creeds can be employed during worship; (3) that those formulated by the Church Catholic and by the denomination and its antecedents all possess a certain authority. Nevertheless, the Basis of Union does not require conformity to a particular set of words as proof of membership and discipleship of Christ, as confirmation of Christ's presence within the Church or as the validating factor in any act of worship. Instead, the Basis of Union implicitly affirms that communicating the Christian gospel and expressing faith in Christ is the task of each generation. Words enable this to happen, but they have the potential to develop and to change their meaning not to mention mislead and entrap those who are unaware of such changes. Consequently, these formulations have a use as credal confessions which declare faith rather than as credal checks which are perceived to prescribe it.

Order

John Calvin and his followers insisted that the Church exists visibly when the scriptures are purely preached and heard and where the sacraments are administered 'according to Christ's institution',¹⁷ which tends to suggest that there ought to be an association between faith and order. Once again, 'order' in the Church is conceived of as a gospel ordinance: it is contained in Paul's words to the Corinthian church that 'all things should be done decently and in order' (1 Cor. 14:40). It is partly this need for order which gives rise to the orders of ministry, particularly because 'order' here is not merely concerned with good management but because it relates to the order of salvation as revealed in Jesus Christ and in his Church. As a result of this, for the Basis of Union, ministry is of the *esse* ('being' or essence) of the Church: one cannot exist without the other. Nevertheless, the exact form which ministry should take is able to change according to context and according to the well-being (*bene esse*) of the church. In other words, while the proclamation of the Gospel in Word and Sacraments is essential to the life of the Church, the form of ordained ministry may not be (as witnessed in the abandoning of the three-fold order of Bishop, Presbyter and Deacon by the Reformers during the sixteenth century). Such a view arises for two reasons.

First, no explicit and eternal form can be discerned in the New Testament, the result of which is an understanding of ministry as both a theological truth and a practical matter. Second, belief in the dynamic relationship between God and his children means that more 'light and truth' are available in each generation. The form of ministry is, then, open to change.

Ministry

There is but one ministry, namely the ministry of Christ which he continues through the Church. This ministry belongs to all the people whom he calls out of the world and consecrates, through baptism, into a life of discipleship, witness and service. They continue this ministry through worship, prayer, proclamation of the gospel and Christian witness, pastoral care and responsibility, and obedient discipleship (§A19).

In order to assist in continuing Christ's ministry, there exist certain ministries which are duly recognized by the church, mainly through ordination but also through commissioning.¹⁸ Ministers of Word and Sacraments are called by God, trained and ordained by the church in order to 'conduct public worship, to preach the Word and to administer the Sacraments, to exercise pastoral care and oversight to give leadership to the church in its mission to the world' (§A21). They exercise this ministry alongside Elders. While the early church differentiated between the presbyteral (eldership) ministry of proclamation and leadership with the diaconal one of service, subsequent developments, particularly in the Dissenting tradition, saw the combination of the two orders. By the time of union in 1972, Presbyterians, on the whole, recognized only the ministry of the Elder while Congregationalists, generally, recognized that of the Deacon, though the tasks performed by both tended to be fairly similar. A number of titles were considered for lay ministry in the local church: 'Deacon' was deemed to be ambiguous; 'manager' was considered and (happily) rejected while 'steward' was also mooted. The committee finally agreed upon 'Elder' and those called to serve in this way were to be ordained. This ordination is practised differently from that of the Minister of Word and Sacraments because it is solely the responsibility of the local church. Elders are elected by the Church Meeting and are able to advise and make recommendations to that meeting. However, the Elder is not merely a managerial consultant. Instead, in council, Elders are responsible for pastoral, spiritual and missionary leadership in the local church. Initially this ministry was conceived of in terms of partnership with Ministers. However, with the reduction in the number of Ministers of Word and Sacrament in the course of the URC's life, local churches can be found where Elders often have to take on these responsibilities in council without the assistance of Ministers. As with presidency at the sacraments, the Synods will have to implement a means of supporting such local churches following the demise of the District (Area) Council.

Although its practice suggests a certain difference, the ordination of Elders, like that of Ministers, is recognized throughout the URC regardless of where or when it occurred. It can be justified in the Dissenting and Reformed traditions by reference to the Westminster Confession (1647) which defined ordination as 'the solemn setting apart to some publick office in the church',¹⁹ where 'publick' means the recognition of the office throughout the church rather than just locally. Elders are only ordained once and subsequently inducted to further periods of service. What perhaps is most worthy of note is that Elders share with Ministers in pastoral oversight and leadership

of local churches and thus the principle was established in the Basis of Union that the leadership of the local church should be in the hands of those who know it pastorally.

Two, 'non-ordained' ministries are recognized in the Basis of Union. Because of the centrality of the Word, the church recognizes the ministry of 'lay preachers'. Lay preachers are not ordained but commissioned, and they are not automatically authorized to preside at the sacraments. Lay preachers, often identified by local reputation, have always played a significant role in the worship-life of the URC. Initially, the URC had no formal means of accrediting lay preachers, though in recent years both the District Council and Synods have been able to recognize, and thus confirm and authorise individuals in this role. Alongside this, the church also trains and commissions Church-Related Community Workers (CRCW). They exist within the church in order to make connections with secular groups and organisations and, through working in partnership with the community, they continue Christ's ministry through service rather than through proclamation. In other words, though recognized as a particular ministry within the life of the URC, the CRCW has no formal role or responsibility for the worship life of the church (which is one point that links the other three 'particular ministries' of minister, elder and lay preacher).

These are sometimes, mistakenly, seen as the only 'ministries' to be exercised in the church. However, they exist in the wider context of Christ's continued ministry which is the role of the whole body of Christ.

Structure

The recognition that all the baptized are involved in Christ's ongoing ministry is reflected in the church's structure which, on first glance, appears to be democratic. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to believe that the URC merely affirms majority rule. Instead, the structure of the church is intended to demonstrate that all members of the Body of Christ are involved in discerning the will of God, witnessing to the gospel and continuing the ministry of Christ in the world. As a result, the life of the URC is governed by its councils where church members meet together to discuss the issues of the day prayerfully under the Word of God. The initial place for discernment is the Church Meeting. The local church also elects representatives to act in council alongside the representatives of other local churches at Synod and General Assembly. Each Council has a responsibility of oversight of the church, its worship, mission and service. This oversight has two foci, the local congregation, its nurture in the faith and the maintenance of its witness, and the World Church with its wider concerns. This is not to suggest that the role of the church councils is to be inward looking, because oversight and mission both involve the recognition of the Church's existence in and for the world. Issues of context and of human need are thus brought before the URC through its Councils. While the General Assembly is the 'central organ' and 'final authority, under the Word of God and the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit' (§B2(5)), it does not implement its decisions in an autocratic way but does so in consultation with the rest of the church.

While majority decisions have tended to become the norm at the church's councils, in principle the gathered representatives are expected to reach 'unanimity in Christ'. It is the councils of the church that remind the local congregations that they belong to the one Church of Christ (catholicity) and it is they that bear the responsibility of maintaining the purity of its faith and its mission (apostolicity). Furthermore, it is the

fact that councils and not individuals hold this responsibility that locates the URC within the Reformed tradition.

From this discussion, it should be clear that the URC's faith and order are inextricably linked. Its belief that the Trinitarian God calls each person to take full part in discernment of God's will in turn gives rise to its conciliar structure in which all the baptized can participate and from which the whole people of God are charged with and enabled to continue Christ's mission in and for the world.

3. What might we do differently today?

The Basis of Union is a document produced at a particular point in history. If it were to be rewritten today, then it may well include different emphases or even completely different clauses.

1. For good reasons, it seems that those who formulated the Basis of Union sought to promote a high and dignified view of the office of ordained minister. The years since 1972 have seen cruel and relentless decline in church membership and the recognition that commitment to supply Ministers of Word and Sacrament to every congregation has proved to be an impossible ideal (§A25). For this reason, more might now be made of other forms of ministry, particularly that of the Elder and, indeed, the involvement of all the baptized in the ministry of Christ. Interestingly, John Marsh (at one time Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford) made the point to the drafting committee that the Church was made visible not just in its faith and order but also in the 'whole pattern of daily life' of its members. Little of this made it into the Basis of Union, and this may have been to the detriment of the URC's ecclesiology, its understanding of ministry and its engagement in mission.
2. Indeed, little is said in the Basis of Union about the role of the church member, either regarding what membership entails or demonstrating its attractiveness as the means of making visible the personal decision to follow Christ through commitment to his people in a particular time and place. This could be because, in 1972, the idea of 'membership' could itself be taken for granted. This is no longer the case, and a stronger, theological justification for membership might well occupy more attention were the document to be rewritten today.
3. For a variety of reasons, practice in the URC now tends to militate against an orderly progression in Christian initiation from baptism to confirmation and entry into membership. Indeed, it is commonly claimed that one of the things that our 'post-modern' culture rejects is the commitment to join and be part of any organization on anything but the thinnest of voluntary bases. Perhaps more should be said today of the importance of leading people (including children) into membership and encouraging them to play a full part in the life of the church, including the Church Meeting.
4. Alternatively, our current practice sees regular and committed levels of involvement from those who may not have been baptized and have not formally entered membership of a local church. While it would be inappropriate for the Basis of Union to suggest anything other than an orderly

series of initiation events, it might be that the URC would have to recognize the contemporary situation and to offer guidance as to how the path from baptism to confession of faith and acceptance into membership might sit alongside full participation by those who have not made such a journey (while also encouraging them to be baptized and enter into full membership of the local church).

5. Apart from the recognition that mission is the task of the local church, overseen by the church meeting (§B2(1)(i)), and that the minister of Word and Sacraments exercises leadership in the Church's 'mission to the world' (§A21), the Basis of Union says very little about mission *per se*, neither understanding what mission is nor how it is engaged in and what might be the expectations that arise from it. The Church's mission is to be a focus for the continuing mission of Christ in the world, namely the revealing of the Kingdom of God in our midst. Such a mission must include aspects of service and of evangelism, of spreading God's love, justice, peace and righteousness as well as proclamation of the good news. The Basis of Union, quite properly, leaves the detail to the Councils of the church, but the lack of clear definitions and guidelines may have contributed to the tendency in the Councils of the church often to concentrate more on business than on Christ's mission. Perhaps more explicit mention of the Church's mission, and the part played in it by all its members, would find greater prominence in any contemporary document.
6. The previous point arises from the fact that the Basis of Union has a strongly institutional feel to it. Perhaps this is inevitable in a document whose purpose, at least in part, is to outline structures and procedures. Nevertheless, it can give the impression that the URC's mission revolves around safeguarding the institution rather than recognizing its structures and procedures as means of enabling the Church's mission in the world. If the document were to be rewritten today, perhaps more emphasis would be placed on relationships between people and between people and God as the foundational aspect of our ecclesiology. God has called *people* into the Church. It is those *people* who continue Christ's mission. It is through the way in which those *people* relate to God and to each other and to those who are in 'the world' that the Church becomes visible. Our structures, it could be argued, should flow from this especially in a church that claims constant reformation under the Word of God and by the leading of the Spirit. Perhaps more emphasis on relationships would confirm that the Church is something we are, rather than a place to which we go.
7. This last point has particular relevance in contemporary western society which, in general, is witnessing the rapid decline of established religious forms with their dignified and ordered worship and the emergence of 'new' or 'fresh expressions' of church which tend to emphasize informality even when they have been keen to adopt liturgical and traditional approaches to worship. Those who have analysed the 'emerging church' believe that it 'expresses Church' in a relevant way to a culture that is both post-modern and post-Christendom instead of imposing an ecclesiology which was relevant within a cultural milieu that appears to be so foreign to the contemporary mind.²⁰ In a

church that has mission as a priority, such cultural exploration is both inevitable and essential and reflection on cultural change may well impact on a modern rewrite of the Basis of Union. The church would still require a structure, but the question would remain concerning how order copes with informality and how the latter can exist alongside the former.

8. Alongside this, 'emerging church' and 'alternative worship' movements challenge us to think more clearly about the link between worship of the Trinitarian God and the actualization of the Church in our midst. In other words, the primary means of demonstrating our existence as Church is our worship. Perhaps more would be said in a contemporary re-write of the Basis of Union about the challenges which come to the traditional denominations from 'fresh expressions' especially regarding the extent to which the gospel may be enculturated without compromising its truth. We might also find ourselves challenging these 'fresh expressions' to demonstrate how their enculturated messages and structures constitute *Church*, especially when worship is not given priority by them.
9. In 1972, there existed a genuine belief that the union of Presbyterians and Congregationalists would be the first step along a road that would lead to further and wider union among the denominations. Not only did this not materialize (apart from the further unions involving the URC), but subsequent ecumenical conversations have moved away from the imperative for organic union. Over this period, the URC's official commitment to organic union has remained constant, but given the differences in understanding which now exist, largely among ecumenical partners but to some extent within the denomination too, it could be that a different ecumenical approach would now be expressed in the Basis of Union. Nevertheless, many in the URC would regret any renunciation of full organic unity because this is considered to be the best way of living in obedience to Christ's prayer (Jn. 17: 11) and thus of making the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church visible on earth.
10. Since 1972, there has been continual debate regarding the exercise of personal episcopē in the church. It should be remembered that 'personal oversight' is exercised by many in the URC, from Moderators to Ministers in local congregations and often to Elders and lay preachers (as well as members, one of another). Some of this might receive more attention if the Basis of Union were to be rewritten. Yet it ought not be forgotten that part of what is distinctive about the Reformed tradition is its location of authority and oversight in church councils. To overemphasize personal episcopē may mean forfeiting this distinctive witness and may also militate against encouraging wider engagement in Christ's ministry by the whole body of the baptized.
11. A more explicitly theological point surrounds the ambiguous view of ordination contained in the Basis of Union. There is no clear reason why Ministers and Elders should be ordained but CRCWs and lay preachers, though recognized, are not (especially when appeal is made – as earlier in this discussion – to the Westminster Confession). It is not clear that Elders truly constitute an 'order' of ministry in the church, while it seems (at least empirically) that CRCWs do. The recognition of church-related community

work as a 'particular ministry' could give rise to a degree of uncertainty in the future where the CRCW is the 'minister' within a congregation that has no Minister of Word and Sacrament. Furthermore, in a tradition which recognizes the central importance of the Word, it seems possible that more stewardship could be exercised over this aspect of ministry, while the clear understanding that Word and Sacrament belong together calls into question their separation through the commissioning of lay preachers.

12. Finally, the Basis of Union is possessed of a sense of a church emerging from an ecumenical past. While its attitude to the future is open-ended, it seems that this open-endedness applies only to the institution of the church. There is little here which encapsulates the 'eschatological hope', or the power in the present age of God's promises regarding the future consummation of all things. Eschatology (the 'doctrine of the last things') can appear esoteric and rather abstract at times. Nevertheless, the Church exists as a sign and the first fruits of the reconciliation of all things to God in Christ. It is, then, a foretaste of the kingdom of God, making known in part that which will only be known in fullness at the 'end' (*telos* or goal) of time. While Christ's cross and resurrection point us to the triumph of God's will over sinful spiritual and physical forces, it is eschatology which takes this teaching and points us to a future in which God's will is finally going to be victorious and he is 'all in all'. Such hope inspires us to see the potential for sanctification in all aspects of the creation as it moves towards its final consummation and, as a result, it provides us with strength to face the present and inspiration to create a new future. Eschatology provides us with hope to see beyond the story of decline which has gripped our churches as well as to see beyond the narrative of ecological disaster and terrorist threat which the secular world provides. Were the Basis of Union to be written today, this sense of the Church as the promise of God's future located in the present may be given greater prominence as the source of hope and vision for the saints which possesses the potential to provide hope and vision and good news to the world.

These are only some suggestions: doubtless there could be many more. They arise not because the Basis of Union is a deficient document, but because faith is dynamic and works within each generation to reveal the will of God for the Church and for the creation, and to inspire us to see God's will 'done on earth as it is in heaven.' The Basis of Union remains a remarkable document because it seeks to incorporate this dynamism, the sense of being penultimate rather than finalized, the need to continue to grow and discover while remaining rooted firmly in the gospel and dedicated to the service of the Kingdom until God makes 'all things well'. It stands as an expression of what it means to be a church both Catholic and Reformed in an ecumenical age. Our task today is to translate this into mission in a secular one.

I would like to express thanks to the following people, all of whom commented on an earlier draft of this paper and whose comments have been incorporated here: Revd Jason Askew, Revd Dr Susan Durber, Revd Keith Forecast, Revd Richard Mortimer, Revd Professor Alan Sell, Mrs Margery Stephenson. I am grateful to each one for their time and insight. However, none of them bears any responsibility for the interpretative stance taken here and any misrepresentation that has consequently arisen. That responsibility is mine alone.

¹ The story of the church's institution and its antecedents is told in David G. Cornick, *Under God's Good Hand: A History of the Traditions which have come together in the United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom* (London: United Reformed Church, 1998).

² Not all churches of the Union joined the Church, and not all congregations of the Church joined the URC.

³ See D. M. Thompson, *Where do we come from? The origins of the United Reformed Church* (London: United Reformed Church, n.d.), p.1.

⁴ The Churches of Christ emerged in the nineteenth century from a strand of Irish Presbyterianism, heavily influenced by the Scottish version, which soon established a presence in Scotland, England, Wales and the United States of America. The Congregational Union of Scotland also came into existence during the nineteenth century in order to facilitate mission among those who had previous connection with strands of Presbyterianism. Despite the date of their particular institution, both emerged from Presbyterianism and thus their roots are firmly grounded in the Calvinist and Presbyterian traditions.

⁵ A Joint Committee of Congregationalists and Presbyterians was convened on New Year's Day 1964 to consider the possible shape of a new, united church.

⁶ See John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, tr. F. L. Battles, ed. J. T. McNeill (London: SCM, 1960), II, p.1015; T. H. L. Parker, *Calvin: An Introduction to His Thought* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1995), p.129.

⁷ See H. Richard Niebuhr, Daniel Day Williams and James M. Gustafson, *The Purpose of the Church and its Ministry* (New York: Harper & Bros, 1956), p.31.

⁸ For a short biography and assessment of the contribution of these men, see John Taylor and Clyde Binfield (eds), *Who They Were in the Reformed Churches of England and Wales, 1901-2000* (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2007).

⁹ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I, pp.78-80.

¹⁰ Consequently, the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church could remind the other denominations that 'it is not clear why the Spirit might not have been as much at work in the breakdown of the threefold pattern in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as in the creation of it in the second and third.' Response to WCC's *Baptism, Eucharist, Ministry: Churches respond to BEM*, I, p.104.

¹¹ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I, p.107. See Galatians 3:1.

¹² Luther taught that the Word was the sacrament and that Baptism and the Lord's Supper were pictorial forms of that one sacrament. Although the Calvinists have never explicitly stated this, there would seem to be little real objection to it from within the Reformed tradition.

¹³ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, II, p.1277

¹⁴ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (2nd ed. London: SCM, 1992), p.227.

¹⁵ Over the years various interpretations of this clause have caused consternation for many. As a result, a paragraph has been added to the Basis of Union stating: 'The provisions of paragraph 25 are intended to establish the principle that worship should be led by representative persons recognised by the wider church as well as by the local church. The provisions do not prevent the congregation assembled for baptismal or communion service from themselves appointing, as a church meeting, a suitable person to preside at the celebration of the sacrament in a case of emergency, for example if the expected president is taken ill or held up in travel. The provisions do not require such an action rather than a postponement of the baptismal or communion service if that seems preferable.' This paragraph confirms the principle that the sacraments should be celebrated with due order rather than specifically demanding that *only* the ordained should preside.

¹⁶ The Basis of Union lists the following: among Presbyterians, the Westminster Confession (1647), A Statement of the Christian Faith (1956); among Congregationalists in England and Wales, the Savoy Declaration (1658), A Declaration of Faith (1967); among Congregationalists in Scotland, A Statement of Faith (1949); among Churches of Christ, Thomas Campbell's Declaration and Address (1809).

¹⁷ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, II, p.1023

¹⁸ The Congregational Union of Scotland had within its number 'Registered Pastors'. Those serving as such at the time of union were permitted to continue ministry under such a title. They were recognized as members of Area Councils and were eligible to be authorized by those councils to preside at the sacraments. No provision exists within the Basis of Union to continue to recognize this ministry (§A21). Also, not all officers of the local church in Scotland were identified under the title of Elder. Those who fulfilled the function of the Elder were recognized as such by the wider councils of the URC but were also permitted to retain their previous title (§A23).

¹⁹ The full text can be found in D. M. Thompson (ed.), *Stating the Gospel: Formulations and Declarations of Faith from the Heritage of the United Reformed Church* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990), pp.10-60.

²⁰ See, e.g., Stuart Murray, *Church After Christendom* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004); Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (London: SPCK, and Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006). For a somewhat critical view, see D. A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005).



MISSION COUNCIL 5-7 October 2007

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Communications and Editorial Committee

The task this committee undertakes for the denomination is that of helping us all to communicate the gospel in the 21st century. Jesus 'told stories to change us all' (*Worship: from the United Reformed Church*, second communion order, p.23). Do the stories we tell change things for the better? Do they help us to rise to the challenges in a shrinking organisation, which often feels on the back foot, where maintaining morale and encouraging a creative spirit are vital for our future?

Since January, when the Revd Martin Hazell became Director of Communications, the committee has continued to consider how our central communications resources can best be used to help us all as we tell God's life-changing stories. It is clear that major changes in church life and in the field of communications over the past 20 years now require us to re-focus our energies and change our patterns of working. We must move away from a centralised way of operating in which many tasks have been handled by communications staff in Church House. That had its benefits in terms of establishing a denominational identity, maintaining standards and launching new communication platforms such as the website. The downside has included the pressure of work created, the inability to harness resources of imagination and communication in the wider church, and the gradual dwindling of energy and new ideas within the central department.

If a communications operation is about anything, then it has to be about modelling good methods of communications for others within its organisation to draw on, otherwise it is not worthy of the name it carries. The good news is that the committee has clear and practical ideas about how we would like to see the denomination doing communications two or three years hence. And we have already begun the process:

- A new **national website** is currently being designed and should be operational within weeks. It will be attractive and contemporary, allowing external users with the appropriate codes to add and amend material to their own pages.
- A new **central database** for Church House is under construction by another IT company, working in co-operation with the firm producing the website. This project is more long-term and will allow Year Book production at the press of a button, offer new possibilities for Synod information storing and sharing, and enable personal details to be corrected far more simply. Not only will we maintain what we need now but we will be in a position to improve the service we provide to

Education and Learning, Commitment for Life, Assembly arrangement, Ministries and other users.

- Our new **Media and Press Development Officer**, Stuart Dew, will strengthen our work in reputation management for the church, promoting the mission of the church, and providing Synod-based training to raise our profile. We recognise that there is a very large piece of work to be done on raising the profile of the United Reformed Church to the outside world with clearer and better defined Mission objectives. We aim to build on the work already in train based on the United Church of Christ in the USA and their God is Still Speaking project.
- With **Reform**, we have been heartened by praise we have received for improvements in format and content. We continue our search for an editor, having been unable to appoint when we interviewed for this post in April. Finding someone with the skills and vision to re-launch our mainstream journal is proving very difficult within the financial package we can offer but we remain committed to that aim. We have re-advertised for both an editor and a sub-editor and will be interviewing on the 23/24 October. The work of the guest editors is greatly appreciated, meanwhile, and we offer thanks to them.

These are all important elements of our strategy to ensure that the Church has a strong national identity. But there are difficult changes still to make if the work of communications is to be as effective as the Church requires. We have already taken the difficult decision of addressing the deficit we run with **Reform** by announcing a substantial price increase next year.

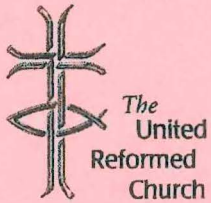
However, there are more difficult decisions to take in the coming months, if we are to ensure the continued health of our communications operation. These concern our **bookshop**, and our role as a **publisher**. We are conscious that these are parts of our operation that have been held dear. The communications world is developing rapidly, and there are exciting new priorities and possibilities. We are not the only denomination faced with similar decisions.

Decisions about the future of these aspects of our work will require full consultation within the department and new ways of working will need to be found.

At all levels of our life together, changes can be destabilising and upsetting, and it is our hope that in sharing our thoughts with Mission Council we can enlist understanding and support. We will come to January's Mission Council with a further report.

Our vision is that the **Communications Department** should be a resource and sounding board for developing church programmes, such as Vision4Life, helping us to produce attractive and readily useable material which reaches those it is intended for – real 'stories to change us all'.

Kirsty Thorpe



MISSION COUNCIL 5-7 October 2007



Ministries Committee Report Challenge to the Church

Context:

1 The *Equipping the Saints* report called on the Church to explore new patterns of ministry and service within the Church to enable and equip the people of God to be a creative and effective force in their communities. It particularly looked for imagination and flexibility in the best use of Ministers of the Word and Sacraments, and for development and extension to build on the successful experiments and effective forms of Local Church Leadership to create a flexible framework for the pastoral care of local congregations.

2 The *Catch the Vision* process has encouraged the councils of the Church at all levels to take seriously that God has a future purpose for the United Reformed Church, and that obedient discipleship involves a deepening of our spirituality, radical changes in the patterns of our life, witness and worship, and the exploration of how to bring the treasures of our Reformed heritage to bear on the current national and community scene in order to make a difference.

3 Mission Council has given Ministries Committee the task of overseeing the process whereby minister numbers are made to track the movement of membership numbers. The current presumption is that this means a reduction of \square 3% p.a.

3.1 It is anticipated that, in the course of the next 10 years, the number of ministers will actually decline at a faster rate than that. This will be particularly affected by a larger-than-normal number of expected retirements in 2012 and 2013.

3.2 \square in order to maintain the life and operation of the Church as currently perceived, there will be the need for some strenuous recruitment. Encouragement of vocations undertaken in the course of 2007 will not start to deliver people into ministry much before 2013. So we may need to consider offering some certificates of eligibility. The criteria for encouraging vocations and recruitment from other Churches have yet to be determined.

4 The Ministries Committee believes that there is an inconsistency between the imaginative thinking involved in *Equipping the Saints* and *Catch the Vision* on the one hand and the task with which it has been entrusted. The committee does not wish to oversee the management of decline we prefer to challenge the United Reformed Church to develop new patterns of ministry in order to enable and deliver a vision of God's tomorrow.

Reflection:

5.1 We have drawn on research that suggests that congregations which are creative and growing tend to have something of a mix of the following four factors in common:

- quality of worship and depth of spirituality
- a small group culture that nurtures members and helps develop skills of individual leadership and mutual care
- clarity of purpose
- strong local leadership, often where the church is the sole responsibility of one person.

5.2 Our listening to Synod Moderators and the *Catch the Vision* task group indicates that churches want effective local ministry, usually identified as a need for a minister.

A challenge to the Church:

6 We are looking for a strategy within the Church that would

- i] support, encourage and develop local churches that are currently vibrant and growing,
- ii] create fresh patterns of Christian presence both by recasting the life and work of less lively churches, and by establishing new groups or networks of people.

In each case this would require provision of ministry that equips and enables the congregation/group:

- a] to support and nurture each other through worship, prayer, study and care;
- b] to present a corporate witness and service to the place where they are set;
- c] to make a difference as the dispersed church where each member exercises a Christian presence in the workplace, leisure place, community involvement or neighbourhood.

7.1 Therefore we propose that there should be provision of appropriate local church leadership in each congregation, or focus of local presence, on the basis of a strategy created by the Synod, or more local grouping, for identifying the needs and opportunity for the provision of such leadership.

7.2 Such provision would be delivered out of a flexibility of leadership patterns. This would involve team working of full-time and part-time ministers or leaders.

7.3 This might start from the base that local church leadership in worship, nurture, witness and service is normally provided by part-time workers - local ordained ministers. Some of these would be part-time stipendiary. Others would be self-supporting ministers.

7.4 Full-time leaders - area ministers - would be responsible for helping to identify mission strategy and ensuring equipment, training, support and accountability of a grouping of congregations/networks/groups and of local leaders.

7.5 There should be a challenge for calling and recruitment of people to offer:

- i] part-time local congregation/group leadership; this might be self-supporting or part-time paid, with a discernment of life-time calling or as a commitment for a specified task or timescale;
- ii] full-time service which would provide ministry towards a grouping of congregations and

groups, and local leaders from a well-based skill set of theology, biblical studies, training and leadership abilities.

8 Further work and consultation will be required in areas such as:

- training - initial training and in-service entitlements and expectations,
- housing provision, upon which a task group has already started some work
- implications for ecumenical partnerships.

At this stage the Ministries Committee is seeking advice about the right general direction in which to go.

Peter I Poulter
September 2007

Questions for small groups to consider :

In the light of the reduction in the number of full-time stipendiary ministers, the ministry do you think that the needs of the Church should be met by either:

- A Increasing the size of pastorates and encouraging enhanced team leadership with elders, especially in areas of administration, pastoral care and worship leadership.
 - B Rationalisation of the number pastoral posts by the closure of non-viable local churches, and/or identification of congregations that do not warrant regular settled ministry
 - C A programme by which every local church or mission project is served by a local minister, part-time stipendiary or self-supporting, supported by area-based full-time ministers.
- Or D None of the above - in which case, what alternative would you suggest?

**ADDITIONAL BUSINESS for Mission Council
(October 2007) - REVISED**

Confidential

**As this document has not yet been approved by the
Charity Commission it must not be used: it is still a
working document**

**THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH
MODEL GOVERNING DOCUMENT FOR
LOCAL CHURCHES**

Sixth Draft 25.09.07

INTRODUCTION

The United Reformed Church was formed in 1972 by the union of the Congregational Church in England and Wales and the Presbyterian Church of England. Since then the United Reformed Church has continued to express its deep commitment to the visible unity of the whole Church. In 1981 it entered into union with the Re-formed Churches of Christ and in the year 2000 with the Congregational Union of Scotland. The United Reformed Church is in frequent dialogue on unity with other traditions and has more than 400 Local Churches united with other denominations.

Though one of the smaller of Britain's 'mainstream' denominations, the United Reformed Church stands in the historic Reformed tradition, whose member denominations make up the largest single strand of Protestantism with more than 70 million members world-wide.

Along with other Reformed churches the United Reformed Church holds to the Trinitarian faith expressed in the historic Christian creeds and finds its supreme authority for faith and conduct in the Word of God in the Bible, discerned under guidance of the Holy Spirit. The United Reformed Church's structure also expresses its faith in the ministry of all God's people through the structure of democratic Councils by which the Church is governed.

Notes about this Model Governing Document:

This document has been prepared with the benefit of legal advice and has also been approved by the Charity Commission and it is therefore commended to Local Churches. However, it has been drafted according to the law of England and Wales and churches in Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man will need to take further legal advice on its application in those jurisdictions.

In Scotland all of our Local Churches are already registered with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator and this document is not currently recommended for use in that country.

As it has been approved by the Charity Commission Local Churches using it will be able to register with the Commission under its "Fast Track" scheme.

Any church wishing to deviate from it should note that fast tracking of its registration application will not be possible.

A Local Church may also have its own rules applicable to its local operation and those will be additional to the matters set out in this document but must not conflict with it.

The Manual of the United Reformed Church which contains full details of the Basis of Union; the Structure of the Church; Rules of Procedure; Baptism; Ministries; the Disciplinary Procedure for ministers and Church Related Community Workers and other aspects of the Church's work can be accessed on the Church's website at www.urc.org.uk under the heading "Our work"

Most buildings used for religious worship and those used as residences for ministers and other church workers and certain other properties are held on the Statutory Trusts which are declared in the United Reformed Church Acts 1972, 1981 and 2000 and are therefore not subject directly to the terms of this document. Advice was given to General Assembly 2006 on the subject of the Statutory Trust property and, again, this advice can be found on the Church's website.

INDEX OF CLAUSES

1	NAME
2	OBJECTS
3	AFFILIATION
4	BELIEFS
5	ACTIVITIES 5.1 General 5.2 Baptism 5.3 Communion
6	JOINING
7	BELONGING
8	THE CHURCH MEETING 8.1 The Church Meeting 8.2 The functions of the Church Meeting
9	LEADERSHIP 9.1 Ministers 9.2 Elders
10	RECORDS AND ACCOUNTS
11	AMENDMENT
12	CLOSURE AND DISSOLUTION

1 NAME

The Church is known as **United Reformed Church**

2 OBJECTS

The Church is a charity and its principal object is the advancement of the Christian faith for the benefit of the public and in accordance with the Basis of Union of the United Reformed Church (hereinafter called "the Basis of Union"). Within the one, holy, catholic, apostolic Church the United Reformed Church acknowledges its responsibility under God:

- to make its life a continual offering of itself and the world to God in adoration and worship through Jesus Christ;
- to receive and express the renewing life of the Holy Spirit in each place and in its total fellowship, and there to declare the reconciling and saving power of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ;
- to live out, in joyful and sacrificial service to all in their various physical and spiritual needs, that ministry of caring, forgiving and healing love which Jesus Christ brought to all whom he met;
- and to bear witness to Christ's rule over the nations in all the variety of their organised life.

3 AFFILIATION

The Church is a member of The United Reformed Church in the United Kingdom and the **Synod of the United Reformed Church** ("the Synod")

The Church will promote, encourage and support the United Reformed Church through its General Assembly and the Synod through prayer, financial contributions and, where appropriate, by making people available from the membership of the Church to form those bodies and to support, encourage and advance the work of them. When it is able to do so the Church will also support local United Reformed Church and ecumenical gatherings and clusters.

4 BELIEFS

The Church stands within the Reformed Tradition recognising as its particular heritage a number of theological statements produced, over many years, by Presbyterians, Congregationalists and Churches of Christ, particularly The Westminster Confession 1647; The Savoy Declaration 1658; Thomas

Campbell's Declaration and Address 1809; A Statement of Faith 1949; A Statement of the Christian Faith 1956 and a Declaration of Faith 1967.

The Church subscribes to the declaration of the Faith of the United Reformed Church as set out in the Basis of Union:-

4.1. We believe in the one and only God, Eternal Trinity, from whom, through whom and for whom all created things exist. God alone we worship; in God we put our trust.

4.2. We worship God, source and sustainer of creation, whom Jesus called Father, whose sons and daughters we are.

4.3. We worship God revealed in Jesus Christ, the eternal Word of God made flesh; who lived our human life, died for sinners on the cross; who was raised from the dead, and proclaimed by the apostles, Son of God; who lives eternally, as saviour and sovereign, coming in judgement and mercy, to bring us to eternal life.

4.4. We worship God, ever present in the Holy Spirit; who brings this Gospel to fruition, assures us of forgiveness, strengthens us to do God's will, and makes us sisters and brothers of Jesus, sons and daughters of God.

4.5. We believe in the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, united in heaven and on earth: on earth, the Body of Christ, empowered by the Spirit to glorify God and to serve humanity; in heaven, eternally one with the power, the wisdom and the love of God in Trinity.

4.6. We believe that, in the fullness of time, God will renew and gather in one all things in heaven and on earth through Christ, and be perfectly honoured and adored.

4.7. We rejoice in God who has given us being, who shares our humanity to bring us to glory, our source of prayer and power of praise; to whom be glory, praise and adoration, now and evermore.

5. ACTIVITIES

5.1 General

In fulfilling the principal purpose of the Church to advance the Christian faith the Church will engage in a range of activities, either on its own or with others, including :-

- Worship and prayer
- Evangelism and Mission, locally, regionally, nationally, internationally and ecumenically
- Expressing God's love to the community through the mission of the Church
- Nurture and growth of Christian disciples

- Training and equipping the congregation for Christian service
- Giving pastoral care
- Supporting charitable social action at home and abroad
- Relating in support and fellowship to other United Reformed Church members and communicants and other Christians
- Raising finance to further the Objects by receiving grants, donations and loans

5.2 Baptism

The United Reformed Church observes the gospel sacrament of baptism into Christ as a gift of God to his Church, and as an appointed means of grace. Baptism is administered with water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. It is the sacrament of entry into the Church and is therefore administered once only to any person.

5.3 Communion

The United Reformed Church celebrates the gospel sacrament of the Lord's Supper. When in obedience to the Lord's command his people show forth his sacrifice on the cross by the bread broken and the wine outpoured for them to eat and drink, he himself, risen and ascended, is present and gives himself to them for their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. United with him and with the whole Church on earth and in heaven, his people gathered at his table present their sacrifice of thanksgiving and renew the offering of themselves, and rejoice in the promise of his coming in glory.

5 JOINING

Admission to the full privileges and responsibilities of membership of the Church shall be in accordance with the Basis of Union and the Structure of the United Reformed Church :-

It is the responsibility of the minister and elders' meeting, before bringing the names of candidates to the church meeting, to be assured of the sincerity of their intention. After adequate preparation, and acceptance by the church meeting, candidates shall be publicly admitted to the full privileges and responsibilities of membership of the Church of Jesus Christ and in particular to the membership of the Local Church.

This act may include the laying on of hands as a sign of the commissioning of those called by God to the service of Jesus Christ. Acceptance of the candidates, as also their acceptance of their commission, shall be signified by the giving and receiving of the right hand of fellowship.

Thereafter they shall be commended to the love and care of their fellow members.

During the act of admission public profession of faith and of commitment to the Church shall be made in one of the forms set out in Schedule A of the Basis of Union.

7. BELONGING

The responsibilities of membership include being faithful in private and public worship, living in the fellowship of the Church and sharing in its work, and to giving and serving, as God so enables, for the advancement of his kingdom throughout the world and to follow Christ and to seek to do and bear to his will as declared in the act of admission to membership of the Church

8 THE CHURCH MEETING

8.1 The Church Meeting of the Local Church shall consist of those persons who have been admitted to the full privileges and responsibilities of membership of the United Reformed Church and whose names are included on the membership roll of such Local Church. The church meeting may invite other persons who regularly worship with the Local Church but whose names are not on the membership roll to attend and speak at its meetings on particular occasions but no such person shall have the right to vote. In the church meeting which shall meet at least once a quarter and at which the minister or one of the ministers shall normally preside, the members have opportunity through discussion, responsible decision and care for one another, to strengthen each other's faith and to foster the life, work and mission of the Church.

8.2 Functions of the Church Meeting:

Concerning the outgoing of the Church:

- (i) to further the Church's mission in the locality;
- (ii) to develop local ecumenical relationships;
- (iii) to further the Church's compassionate ministry in the locality and throughout the world;
- (iv) to consider and support the wider work of the Church at home and abroad;
- (v) to consider public questions in relation to the Christian faith;
- (vi) to bring concerns for consideration by the elders' meeting and wider councils of the church.

Concerning the nurture of the fellowship:

- (vii) to call a minister with the relevant concurrence;
- (viii) to elect elders and officers, determining their number and period of service, and representatives to wider councils;
- (ix) to admit and transfer members, to maintain standards of membership, and to suspend or remove names from the membership roll, always on advice from the elders' meeting;

- (x) to consider, always on advice from the elders' meeting, any application for recognition as a candidate for the ministry and to transmit it, if approved, to the Synod ;
- (xi) to adopt financial reports;
- (xii) to receive reports and proposals from the elders' meeting, synod and General Assembly and to authorise appropriate action;
- (xiii) on the recommendation of the elders' meeting to make or provide for the making of arrangements for the proper maintenance of buildings and the general oversight of all the financial responsibilities of the Local Church.

And generally:

- (xiv) to do such other things as may be necessary in pursuance of its responsibility for the common life of the Church.

9 LEADERSHIP

The United Reformed Church recognises that Christ gives himself to his Church through Word and Sacrament and through the total caring oversight by which his people grow in faith and love, the exercise of which oversight is the special concern of elders and ministers.

9.1 MINISTERS

A Local Church may, at any one time, have one or more ministers in pastoral charge; these are called to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament.

After approved preparation and training, they may be called to be ministers of Local Churches, or missionaries overseas, or to some special and approved ministry, and are then ordained and inducted to their office. They are commissioned to conduct public worship, to preach the Word and to administer the Sacraments, to exercise pastoral care and oversight, and to give leadership to the church in its mission to the world. Their service may be stipendiary or non-stipendiary.

9.2 ELDERS

9.2.1 The Elders' Meeting of the Local Church shall consist of the minister(s) and the elders elected by the church meeting of such Local Church and shall exercise oversight of the spiritual life of the Local Church. The elders' meeting shall serve the Local Church and by its relation to the wider councils of the United Reformed Church represent the whole Church to the Local Church. The minister, or one of the ministers, or during a pastoral vacancy the interim moderator, shall normally preside over the elders' meeting.

Except where a separate appointment has been made by the Church Meeting, the members of the Elders' Meeting collectively are the charity trustees for the working funds of the Church and for any properties or investments to which the United Reformed Church Statutory Trusts do not apply.

Elders elected by the church meeting are ordained to their office and are inducted to serve for such limited period as the church which elects them shall determine. All elders are eligible for re-election, and those elected shall enter upon their office by induction. On moving to another Local Church an ordained elder is eligible for election by that church to the elders' meeting, and, if so elected, is inducted. The ordination and induction of elders shall be carried out in the course of public worship by a minister of the Local Church (or, during a pastoral vacancy, by the interim moderator) acting with the serving elders and in accordance with the provisions of Schedule B of the Basis of Union.

9.2.2 Functions of the Elders' Meeting:

- (i) to foster in the congregation concern for witness and service to the community, evangelism at home and abroad, Christian education, ecumenical action, local inter-church relations and the wider responsibilities of the whole Church;
- (ii) to see that public worship is regularly offered and the sacraments are duly administered, and generally to promote the welfare of the congregation;
- (iii) to ensure pastoral care of the congregation, in which the minister is joined by elders having particular responsibility for groups of members;
- (iv) to nominate from among its members a church secretary (or secretaries), to be elected by the church meeting, to serve both the church meeting and the elders' meeting;
- (v) to arrange for pulpit supply in a vacancy;
- (vi) to keep the roll of members (see paragraph 8(1) above) and (as an aid to the discharge of the congregation's pastoral and evangelistic responsibility) lists of names of adherents and children attached to the congregation, and in consultation with the church meeting to maintain standards of membership and to advise on the admission of members on profession of faith and by transfer, on the suspension of members, and on the removal of names from the roll;
- (vii) to be responsible for the institution and oversight of work among children and young people and of all organisations within the congregation;
- (viii) to call for the election of elders and advise on the number required;
- (ix) to consider the suitability of any applicant for recognition as a candidate for the ministry and to advise the church meeting about its recommendation;
- (x) to recommend to the church meeting arrangements for the proper maintenance of buildings and the general oversight of all the financial responsibilities of the Local Church;
- (xi) to act on behalf of the church meeting and bring concerns to the wider councils of the United Reformed Church;
- (xii) to do such other things as may be necessary in pursuance of its responsibility for the common life of the Church.

10 RECORDS AND ACCOUNTS

10.1 The Elders must comply with the requirements of the Charities Act 1993 (or any superseding legislation) as to the keeping of financial records, the audit or independent examination of accounts and the preparation and transmission to the Commission of:

- 10.1.1 annual returns;
- 10.1.2 annual reports;
- 10.1.3 annual statements of account; and
- 10.1.4 confirmation of changes to the Elders and of any details about the Church recorded in the Central Register of Charities.

10.2 The Elders must keep proper records of:

- 10.2.1 all proceedings at meetings of the Elders;
- 10.2.2 all reports of committees; and
- 10.2.3 all professional advice obtained

10.3 Financial records, annual reports and statements of account relating to the Church for at least the previous six years must be available for inspection by any Elder.

10.4 Ensure that proper records are kept by the Church Meeting of the proceedings in those meetings

10.5 A copy of the latest available statement of account for the Church must be supplied to any person who makes a written request and pays the Elders' reasonable costs (as required by the Charities Act 1993).

11. AMENDMENTS

11.1 This Governing Document may be altered only by a resolution of a Special Church Meeting (called for that purpose) and where at least three months notice of the proposed alteration has been given and the resolution is passed by a three quarters majority of the members present and voting.

11.2 No alteration may be made which:

- is contrary to The Basis of Union, the Structure of the United Reformed Church or the United Reformed Church Acts;
- is contrary to the terms of any Trust Deeds affecting the church property and where these have not been superseded by the United Reformed Church Acts
- alters the terms of clauses 2, 11 or 12 without the prior written consent of the Charity Commission
- is not approved by the Synod such approval to be evidenced in writing by the Moderator or Clerk of the Synod.
- would cause the Church to cease to be a charity

11.3 A copy of any resolution amending this Governing Document must be sent to the Charity Commission and the Synod within 21 days of it being passed.

12. CLOSURE AND DISSOLUTION

Where a resolution to close has been passed by the Church Meeting and approved by the Synod or where the Church has ceased to meet for worship for at least six months and the Synod has resolved that the Church should close the assets of the Church, after the satisfaction of debts and liabilities, shall be applied in one or more of the following ways

- directly for the Objects
- by transfer to any charity or charities established for exclusively charitable purposes that are the same or similar to the objects

as decided by a Special Church Meeting (called for that purpose) or, failing decision in that way, as decided by the Synod.

A final report and statement of account relating to the Church must be sent to the Commission.